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In Gandhiji's Mirror



Pyarelal & Sushila Nayar

IN GANDHIJ'S MIRROR

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Preface

My late brother Pyarelalji wrote about various close colleagues and associates of Mahatma Gandhi on different occasions. He hoped that these sketches would be published in the form of a book. He included a few of my writings and asked me to write some more. He particularly wanted me to write about Gandhiji's sons, Ramdas Gandhi and Harilal Gandhi and about Jamnalal Bajaj who had become Gandhiji's fifth son and served him with deep devotion till the end of his life. Pyarelalji said he would revise and edit what I wrote. But he died before I could write these additional pieces.

After my brother's death in October 1982, I showed the manuscript to a publisher who advised me to combine the different pieces written by him about the same person and add some more material where necessary. I tried to bring together what Pyarelalji had written. I also collected fresh material so that I could add some biographical details at the end of some of Pyarelalji's sketches. I added a few more sketches, as my brother had wanted me to do. It was his idea to publish the book under our joint authorship.

The book gives pen pictures of events and personalities and is likely to be of abiding interest to those who are familiar with them. But even to the post-Independence generation the material should be of considerable interest and value. Gandhiji was said to make heroes out of common clay. In this book one gets a glimpse of the way he achieved this. His objective was to create workers for the service of the country. He did his best to help anyone who came in contact with him to

develop his or her fullest potential.

I hope this book will provide some inspiration to the young of India who have to carry forward the torch and continue their labours until Swaraj, as Gandhiji perceived it, becomes a reality.

New Delhi

12 March, 1990

SUSHILA NAYAR

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Last but not least, I wish to thank all those who have helped with the typing of the manuscript. I also thank the librarians who provided me with some valuable information and references.

New Delhi
12 March, 1990

SUSHILA NAYAR

Introduction

Gandhiji was a myriad-faceted personality with wide-ranging interests. They comprehended in their broad sweep both the mundane and the ultra-mundane. In fact, in his case they were not different essentially or mutually exclusive—one served as the stepping-stone to the other. The latter in its turn held the key to the near miracles that he startled the world with from time to time. His sustained, strenuous practice of the commandment 'to love one's neighbour as oneself', with all its implications, had attuned his spirit to that of the millions so finely that he could instinctively divine what was passing in their mind—their hopes, fears and aspirations. So keen indeed was this awareness of his that any good or harm done to them became like a good or harm done to himself. In consequence, when he suffered for the wrong done to or by others, they were all filled with anguish and not only they but humanity at large.

Gandhiji's Satyagraha was not a mere abstract philosophy but a philosophy in action; his truth was not a cloistered virtue, but something that had to be lived and realized in society. This made social action the criterion on which his practise of truth was tested. Gandhiji's search for truth, therefore, necessarily involved him in innumerable activities and relationships. Perhaps no other person that we know of came into intimate contact with such a multitude and variety of people or was involved in so many varied activities, individual as well as corporate, as he. The names of organizations that he created or was associated with were legion.

It may truly be said of Gandhiji that he lived not only *for* mankind but *in* mankind. He never sought to run away from weakness, error, strife or misery but took them as a challenge. They had to be grappled with and eradicated. In this task he needed helpers and associates. They were drawn from all walks

of life and sections of society. He felt equally at home with them and made them all feel perfectly at home with himself. From the humblest workers of the rank-and-file to national leaders—some of them heroes in their own right—all deemed it a privilege to be associated with him in the righteous struggle and gave him of their loyalty and affection unstintingly. And the secret of it was that he never exploited his instruments; never expected anyone to do what he himself was not prepared for or that would degrade. He took care that all activity undertaken at his behest helped those who engaged in it in attaining self-perfection. His absolute insistence on the purity of the means guaranteed that. Those who worked with and under him always felt that whatever the result of the battle they were engaged in—irrespective of success or failure in terms of their immediate objective—would in the process ennoble and elevate them in terms of the highest in life. They found in him the best of them all and the best part of each. And all of them shared with Casey, the ex-Governor of Bengal, the feeling that in Gandhiji was a man of the world with whom they could discuss their most intimate personal or domestic problems and obtain wise practical guidance. He commanded no armies, held no office, owned no wealth, was not a prodigy intellectually, but wielded more power than any potentate or dictator ever did. To understand him and the secret of his influence one has to know the microcosm in which he lived, moved and had his being, the type of people who came to him, why they came, how he acted upon them and how they reacted to him. We shall then be able also to realize somewhat the secret that enabled him to make heroes out of common clay.

This collection of sketches is being published in the hope that it would in a measure answer this purpose. The bulk of them were written in Gandhiji's life-time and were scrutinized by him. The rest were written at different times after he left us. Some are being published for the first time. They have all been revised, and some of the more important ones have been updated and amplified. To help the reader interpret them in their proper context in time I have at the end of some of the sketches noted down the year when it was first written.

At the Feet of the Master

Gandhiji came into my life in rather extraordinary circumstances. I was studying in the High School at Lahore and G. K. Gokhale had returned from South Africa. He was to address a public gathering in Bradlaugh Hall to appeal for help in the South African Indian Satyagraha struggle, which Gandhiji was conducting, and I attended the meeting with two of my cousins. We were punished for attending a 'political meeting' without obtaining permission in 'due form' from the hostel authorities. We were given the choice of tendering an apology, which we refused, maintaining that the fault lay not with us but with the Superintendent who was at the time absent from the hostel: we had no choice but to go up to his chief for leave. Against our will, we were turned into rebels and initiated unawares into Satyagraha. Little did we realize then that our experience was a portent of things to come and what we were being driven into the whole of India would one day experience under Gandhiji's inspiration.

The meeting was a grand affair. Lala Lajpat Rai was in the chair. He made an impassioned speech, full of his usual fire, which sent everybody's blood coursing through the veins. What impressed me most, however, was Gokhale's description of how Gandhiji himself had not only courted imprisonment but how, under his inspiration, his wife and children also had gone to prison, with thousands of Indian men, women and children in the spirit of the martyrs of old.

Six years elapsed before I had my first physical glimpse of Gandhiji. I was then studying for my degree examination in Government College at Lahore. One summer evening, in April 1919, a number of us were relaxing after college hours on the terrace of our hostel when we heard the sound of firing in the distance, followed by the loud noises of a yelling, shouting crowd. Bareheaded and barefooted we issued forth in the direction of the firing. On reaching The Mall, the smart, main thoroughfare

of the city, we were engulfed in a vast concourse of people running helter-skelter in our direction with a body of armed mounted police in hot pursuit. Recklessly the horsemen rode among the crowd, regardless of whether anyone was maimed or overrun. Some of the crowd, mostly youth, had blood-bespattered clothes as a result of the firing. The crowd had heard that Mahatma Gandhi had been arrested while on his way to the Punjab. They were marching in peaceful procession to lodge a protest and lay a petition for the release of the Mahatma before Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab. Ordered to stop and disperse, they had refused. The authorities saw in the behaviour of the crowd the rising tide of 'insubordination'. What followed was an attempt on their part to curb it and teach the people a lesson which, as Sir Michael later put it, 'they would not forget for fifty years'.

On 13 April 1919 came the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in the city of Amritsar. It was followed by the proclamation of Martial Law in large parts of the Punjab. The press was muzzled. Daily the news trickled through the gagged silence of unspeakable humiliations being heaped upon the people under cover of Martial Law. Curfew was imposed. Men and women were made to creep on their bellies if they wished to cross what came to be known as the 'crawling lane' in Amritsar, where an English woman had earlier been attacked by an excited crowd. Respectable men were tied to flogging posts and publicly flogged; even children of a tender age did not escape the lash for technical breaches of Martial Law. The Principals of several colleges in Lahore were ordered by Colonel Frank Johnson, of the South African empire-building fame and the officer-in-charge of the administration of Martial Law, to rusticate a certain percentage of their students for 'participation in unlawful activities' regardless of whether they had participated in any such activity or not. The students of one college were made to walk sixteen miles in the hot sun daily to report themselves to the military authorities at a particular spot and to salute the Union Jack under duress in order to 'correct their sentiment' towards British power.

Black despair choked the soul of the youth. What was particularly anguishing to us was that some of the principals who were treated as our spiritual leaders carried out the Martial Law orders and threw their charges to the wolves, instead of protecting

their innocent students. From our childhood we had been taught that the power of the spirit is an all-conquering force which nothing on earth could subdue. What was spirituality worth if it could not stand up to temporal power when that power turned oppressive and abused its might? Was spirituality only a beatitude which availed only in the hereafter, but was of no consequence in mundane affairs?

The annual session of the Indian National Congress that year was to be held during Christmas week at Amritsar. I was then studying for my Master of Arts in English Literature in Government College, Lahore, and decided to attend the Congress session as a student visitor. It was a raw winter evening, made worse by a heavy downpour when I reached Amritsar. From the station I trudged through the mud and the slush to the house of a friend. While I was climbing the stairs, a party of our illustrious national leaders came up from behind. It included Swami Shraddhanand, head of Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar, draped in his ochre sannyasi's robes, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, founder of Banaras Hindu University, and popularly known as the 'silver-tongued' orator of the Indian National Congress—and Gandhiji. I hid myself behind a door-leaf on the staircase landing. From there I heard a conversation which constituted a landmark in my life.

It had been decided to acquire the site of Jallianwala Bagh for the nation and to turn it into a memorial to the martyrs who had fallen in General Dyer's massacre on the fateful 13th of April 1919, and the deputation had come to meet the leading cloth merchants to expedite the collection for the memorial fund. During the discussion Swami Shraddhanandji exhorted them in the name of the ancient *arya sanskriti* (culture) of Bharatvarsha; Malaviyaji, with his characteristic winsomeness, appealed in the name of *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wordly gain), *kama* (happiness) and *moksha* (salvation). All these would be theirs if only they loosened their purse-strings. But somehow it did not cut ice with the hard-headed, hard-boiled Amritsar businessmen. When Gandhiji's turn came to speak, he neither coaxed nor cajoled. Discarding all rhetoric and sentimental appeal, in level tones he told them that in the name of the nation they had made a solemn resolve in his presence. That made him party to it. A target had been fixed; it must be reached. If they failed to do

their duty he would sell his Ashram and make up the amount that had been pledged. He would not let a national resolve to which he had been witness be violated. There was a ring of iron determination behind these simple words that was unmistakable. The businessmen at once saw that here was a different kind of client who said what he meant and meant what he said. The required amount was subscribed on the spot and a never-to-be forgotten lesson in the sanctity of national resolves was burnt into them.

A battle royal was waged in the Congress during that session over the Montford Scheme of reforms. In the draft resolution the reforms were described as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing'. Lokamanya Tilak advocated acceptance of the scheme in order to prove its inadequacy. 'Whether we like to use it or not', he explained, 'has been deliberately omitted in the resolution because it goes without saying that every statute of Parliament will be obeyed in this country. If we are loyal subjects of the British nation, every act that is passed by Parliament is binding on us.' Gandhiji objected to the use of 'the ambiguous middle'. Joining issue with the Lokamanya that a loyal subject was bound to obey every statute of Parliament, irrespective of the right or wrong of it, he said: 'I am here to declare that I shall obey the orders and statutes of the King Emperor only so long as they appeal to my head and heart, but it is no part of my duty to obey any order or law against which my conscience rebels. I shall disobey all such orders or laws and take the penalty.' If a thing was 'disappointing', he went on, it had to be rejected outright. That would be manlier. If, on the other hand, they accepted it, it should be to give it a fair trial. He was opposed to acceptance with 'mental reservations'. In the plenary session he delivered a speech in Hindustani which breathed the fire of conviction. 'I shall challenge that position and I shall go across from one end of India to the other and say we shall fail in our culture, we shall fall from our position, if we do not respond to the hand that is extended to us.' And with that he passionately flung down his white cap on the rostrum to plead bareheaded with the Lokamanya. The end was a dramatic, eleventh hour compromise. The substance of Gandhiji's amendment was accepted.

Although Gandhiji's plea was for moderation, the spirit behind it was paradoxically that of a rebel, more thorough-going and revolutionary than any that India had ever produced. The extremist plea for wrecking the reforms, on the other hand, carried with it a declaration of unquestioning loyalty to the Crown. The words 'moderate' and 'extremist' lost all meaning to me thereafter. I have since found that the temperance in the language of moderation when backed by a grim 'Do or Die' determination constitutes a more serious challenge to entrenched power than a fire-breathing revolutionary's flamboyant threats. Similarly, non-violent resistance and non-cooperation, backed by the non-violent organization of a well-disciplined people, poses a greater threat to an autocrat or an oppressor than the terrorist's cult of the revolver and the bomb. By the same token, there is nothing more revolutionary than creative suffering, or more reactionary than blind brute force.

To everybody's surprise Gandhiji opposed the demand for the trial and punishment of General Dyer. Dyer, he pleaded, had but carried out orders. In the execution of his orders he had committed a gross error of judgement, thereby proving himself unfit for the post he held. They could ask for his removal on that score, but not seek revenge—'Forgiveness adorns the brave.' Their fight must be directed not against the individual but the system of which he formed part and which needed to be changed.

Even more important was Gandhiji's utterance on the resolution condemning the excesses committed by the mob. Napoleonic in its brevity and force, every word of it is imprinted on my memory in letters of flame. Characterizing it as the most important resolution before the house, Gandhiji told the audience that the key to success in the future lay in their hearty acceptance of the truth underlying that resolution and acting accordingly. 'To the extent to which we fail to recognize the eternal truth underlying this resolution, we are bound to fail. . . . I agree that there was grave provocation given by the Government. The Government went mad, but our people also went mad. I say, do not return madness with madness but return madness with sanity and the situation will be yours.' His voice was full-chested and so distinct that it could be heard clearly to the farthest end of the vast gathering in that pre-mike era.

Some time after my return from the Congress session I went to Gandhiji's temporary residence at Lahore to seek an appointment through the good offices of a friend. Martial Law trials were then in full swing and Gandhiji's residence was at all hours besieged by the friends and relatives of those who were involved in the prosecutions. One such deputation was in conference with him when I reached. It was considered to be a hopeless case, as there was a murder charge against the accused. 'Has your man really done anything or is he falsely implicated—utterly innocent?' Gandhiji asked, and then added, 'Let me have the full facts of the case and a clean confession if your relation has done anything wrong. I shall then see what I can do.'

Everybody was aghast. What hope was there after such a confession for an accused charged with political murder, and that too, of an Englishman in that climate of reprisals and revenge? One might as well sign one's own death warrant. Gandhiji saw their utter despair. Consoling he said to them: 'I for one would like to save from the gallows even the worst murderers. In my Ashram there are several members who were implicated in cases of political violence. They made a clean breast of it. Converted to non-violence, they are today my trusted co-workers.'

There was something in his voice, a calm assurance of strength, joined to a boundless compassion and unearthly detachment that was strangely soothing; a quiet dignity and sense of kindness, suggestive of an access to some hidden reservoir of power which feared no obstacle, knew no defeat and could find a fourth dimensional way, as it were, even through an impenetrable granite wall. It was the deep calling unto the deep. So far as I remember, the deputation found strength to follow Gandhiji's advice and their man was also saved.

When at Amritsar Gandhiji opposed the demand for the impeachment of General Dyer and pressed for condemnation of the popular excesses, many had wondered. I now saw that both stemmed from the same great principle—one must make a clear distinction between the wrong and the wrong-doer, fight the one with one's last breath and forgive the other. The stand that Gandhiji had taken in respect of General Dyer at Amritsar also gave him the courage and strength to ask successfully for the pardon of the accused at Lahore.

Here was what I had been looking for—a glimpse of the power of the spirit which is its own seal and sanction, which no power on earth can subdue and which never fails. The deliverer had come to call upon a prostrate people to stand, shed their fears and walk with their heads erect. I had found my Master. Thereafter I was his man.

The interview that I had sought of Gandhiji came a couple of days later. He had just had his bath and was on the way to a midday meal. Wrapped in a white Kashmiri *pashmina* shawl, he sat bolt upright. There was majesty in his simplicity. The deep mellifluous voice held one spellbound. The eyes reflected an infinity of kindness, compassion and peace. The body was thin to the point of emaciation, but the prominent barrel chest gave a sense of tremendous power. The broad, smooth brow showed not a wrinkle. The countenance was radiant, the skin silken smooth and the complexion clear. I told him how a deep dissatisfaction with current values in which I had been brought up had possessed me, that what I saw around me seemed to make no sense, and finding the meaning of life had become the question of questions to me.

He followed every word with an interest and concentration that set me completely at my ease. When I had finished he remarked with a reassuring smile that such questioning was by no means peculiar to me. It happened to everybody some time or other in life. There was nothing to worry about. Finally he said, 'Come to my Ashram when I reach there. In the peaceful atmosphere of the Ashram you will be able to work out answers to your questions.' But when I asked him whether I should not discontinue my studies and straightaway proceed to his Ashram, to my surprise, he said, 'No. You should finish your studies first. It would have been different if you had not undertaken them. It is not wisdom to leave in the middle what one has once taken up.'

In the autumn of that year I gave up my studies in response to Gandhiji's call for non-cooperation and went to the Ashram at Sabarmati. The movement that he had launched was in full swing and Gandhiji was on tour when I reached there.

'Can you write?' he asked me as soon as we met. 'I have never done it—I mean for the press,' I replied. 'That does not matter,'

he said. 'Write a thesis on the theory and practice of non-co-operation in English and another in Hindustani on any subject of your choice, say for instance, "Why I came to Gandhi". And I want both to be in my hands before 3.00 p.m. today,' he added. I sat down immediately to scribble out the first, napped over it for half an hour, tore it up, rewrote it and delivered it to him along with the Hindustani piece at 1 p.m. The next day he again left the Ashram on one of his whirlwind tours and I buried myself in the Ashram routine, forgetting all about the thesis.

One afternoon, while I was bending over my chores, I got a letter. It was in Hindustani—from Gandhiji, saying that he had gone through my thesis and had liked it. It ended with the sentence, 'I want to make use of your brains'. A couple of days after this I received a wire from Gandhiji asking me to join him immediately on his tour at No 1 Daryaganj, Dr M. A. Ansari's residence in Delhi. Two days later I found myself seated in Gandhiji's presence, facing a barrage of questions concerning minute, intimate details about all the members of the Ashram that constituted his wider family. I was then sent for a wash to make myself comfortable after the long railway journey. Later in the day I was again called. He had my thesis before him. He had decided to publish it in *Young India*, he said. Had I read Thoreau? I had not, I replied. I had derived my inspiration from the English writers, particularly the Romantic poets and from Tolstoy. I was not much of a reader, I explained; I found it tedious to read a book through; reading was only as a catalytic aid to my thinking. He said that was all right, and sent my piece for publication in his weekly, *Young India*, 'as an able contribution by a young Punjabi student who has non-co-operated lately'.

The next day the party was to visit Rohtak in the afternoon. I stayed behind. On his return Gandhiji asked why I had not come. I had not been invited; nobody had asked me, I replied. He forthwith gave peremptory instructions to his entourage in regard to me for the future. Later in the evening I was again summoned. Someone in the party must have been remiss, he said, referring to the afternoon's incident, but I should have made it my concern to save the erring from the consequence of his mistake. When I pleaded my innate shyness he said, 'Shyness or modesty that stands in the way of performing one's duty should be guarded against and regarded as a species of subtle pride.'

On the same day Gandhiji introduced me to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj as 'the young man I spoke to you about'. The affectionate, warm-hearted Jamnalalji at once took me under his wing and, as a token of his affection, made me eat a piece of corn-meal cake and, when I hesitated, clinched the matter by saying, 'In the matter of eating and drinking you should be guided by me; in everything else, follow Bapu.'

That evening Mahadev Desai left for Ahmedabad to look after *Young India*, and my long schooling under Gandhiji began: moisture on the outside of a glass must be wiped before handing it to anyone; after washing one's hands do not push open a door with them while serving meals, for they get contaminated again; before offering a cup of milk it should be stirred with a spoon to bring to the surface any dirt that might have settled at the bottom; the rationale and importance of dotting one's i's and crossing the t's as the key to legibility; how to make a bed; how to clean a commode; how to hand someone a pen or a knife; how to scan a newspaper thoroughly in the shortest time—these were some of the little things that I was to learn in the next few days. Not a small part of my training consisted of unlearning what I had previously learnt at school or college: 'Call for facts, do not speculate in the void; it is a waste of energy, a sign of mental laziness. Do not cite epigrams, distrust them; learn to think for yourself, thought is more precious than language and judgement most precious of all. If the judgement is faulty everything else is worth nothing', and so on. Later he began to chafe me for being thin-skinned and to impress upon me the importance of having a 'rhino hide'. Once he politely told me that I was a street Arab, that one needed to be a *bhogi* (one who knows how to enjoy the good things of life), 'like myself', and not a *yogi* (unlearned in the art of living), to be able to serve well.

On another occasion Gandhiji gave us a passage from Milton's *Areopagitica* and asked us to point out a flaw which he had found in the writer's argument. The writer in that passage had argued that intellect is the mind's eye. To suppress a book is, therefore, worse than to kill the author; for death only puts out the light of the eye, but to suppress a book is to put out the light of the mind which is God's most precious gift to man. 'It is an overstatement of the case,' he explained afterwards, 'and that is bad advocacy. Besides, the work suppressed may not be the

writer's best or last. If he lives, he may produce another and perhaps a better work. I had expected a writer of Milton's calibre to be more careful in his thinking.'

Mahadev's absence was a great deprivation to me. At our very first meeting he had constituted himself into an elder brother to me—a role which he continued to fill till death took him away. In his absence, Devadas, as 'the senior partner of the firm', became my friend, philosopher and guide and took upon himself to initiate me into my duties. I was raw and inexperienced. His advice came in handy. I still remember one piece: 'If you want to tempt Bapu to eat a particular fruit, speak of it in superlative terms. With his South African standards, he is very fastidious in the matter of fruit.' It took me quite a lot of patient study and observation to discover that Gandhiji's simplicity was a very complex art. 'Simplicity is not so simple a thing as most people imagine', he remarked on another occasion.

In 'If' Rudyard Kipling has given us a pen-picture of his ideal man. He is one who can keep his head 'when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you'; one who can trust himself even when all men doubt him, but 'make allowance for their doubting too'; one who can wait 'and not be tired by waiting, or being lied about won't deal in lies'; or 'being hated give way to hating, and yet not look too good, nor talk too wise'.

It would be difficult to give a more apt description of the Gandhiji that I have known, than is contained in Kipling's lines. Calm in the midst of storms, awake when others were lulled into false security, alert to danger when on the surface all seemed fair, seeing from the luminous height of his serenity ways out of the world's mazes, inexpressibly anguished by the sufferings of others but indifferent to his own—by dint of the magic of his detachment he transmuted his anguish into a relentless drive for self-denial, self-purification and self-surrender. Never once did I hear from his lips an uncharitable expression or a harsh judgement about an opponent, a critic or even a maligner. It was not forgiveness, but whole-hearted acceptance by him of their standpoint as *their* truth which for the time being held the same place in their growth as his truth in his own, and thus entitled to equal respect.

Gandhiji's stay in Delhi lasted only a few days. Towards the close, he performed the opening ceremony of Tibbia College. I

noticed that before going to the meeting he wrote out his speech in full, in English. I grasped the significance of this when later, on his return from the meeting, he expressed great satisfaction that he had succeeded in giving full expression in Hindustani to all that he had to say. He was at that time struggling with his Hindustani, and during railway journeys his 'Munshi', *A Hindustani Self-Instructor* was his unfailing companion. Whenever Gandhiji could steal a minute—while taking his meals or even in the lavatory—he would turn to it.

We were still in Delhi when a Hindu Mahasabha deputation waited on Gandhiji. They requested him to preside over a *Go Raksha Parishad* (Cow-Protection Conference). Their ideology was of the orthodox, militant type. Gandhiji declined their invitation, saying that, although he attached great importance to the subject, his ideas on *Go Raksha* were peculiar to himself and differed from theirs. 'So long as there is the bone of a single slaughtered cow to be found in India or a cow that is mere skin and bone, cow protection is a misnomer—mere make-believe. My cow-protection goes far beyond yours; it requires the uttermost purity, self-sacrifice, austerity, hard study and penance on our part. I see no place for these in your programme.'

Shortly afterwards, a Congress deputation came and discussed with him the question of untouchability. They were about to hold a conference, but their draft resolutions did not include any resolution about the abolition of untouchability. The Congress had not yet adopted it as an integral part of its programme, and some of the deputationists could not understand its importance in terms of the independence struggle. They thought it a minor social issue which should not be allowed to disrupt their united political front. But Gandhiji was adamant. 'You do not know who it is that you are pitted against', he told them. 'The moment they—the British—find that the game of setting up Hindus against Muslims is played out, they will use the "suppressed" classes issue in pursuance of their policy of "divide and rule".' This was ten years before the creation of separate franchise for the Harijans after the second Round Table Conference made the Harijan question the question of questions in our struggle for freedom and the main obstacle in the realization of our goal.

Still another group discussed with Gandhiji the question of

what a physically weak man must do in terms of non-violence to protect the honour of a sister who was threatened by a ruffian. 'What does a dog do when you try to pull it away from a piece of nourishment that it has picked up?' Gandhiji asked in reply, and added, 'It is cloven in two but will not let go its hold. Should not a man do as much to protect the honour of his sister?' He uttered these words with a passion that shamed into silence all dialectical sparring after that.

It was here, again, that I had a glimpse of Gandhiji's overwhelming kindness of spirit and unfailing alertness even in the midst of heavy preoccupations. One day he had been busy with an endless stream of visitors and deputations from early morning till late in the afternoon. His room on the first floor was crowded to the full. Suddenly at 4 p.m. he got up in the middle of a heated argument and made for the flight of stairs leading to the ground floor. I followed him, mystified. Noticing my puzzlement, he said: 'You know there was a post-card in yesterday's mail from Swami Satyadev to say that he would be coming to see me at 4.15 today.'

'Yes, sir', I replied. The Swamiji was then engaged in the propagation of Hindi as our *lingua franca* under Gandhiji's guidance.

'And he also wrote that he was coming to Delhi for an eye operation for the removal of the cataracts', Gandhiji continued. 'This means that he has lost his vision and will be unable to come upstairs by himself. You ought to have waited for him at the foot of the stairs to escort him. But I noticed that it had not occurred to you.'

Just at that moment the Swamiji arrived and, taking him by the hand, Gandhiji led him to his room upstairs.

From Delhi we went to Lucknow where a session of the Khilafat Conference was to be held. It was at Lucknow that I was first introduced to Pandit Motilalji as 'the writer of that article on the theory and practice of non-co-operation'. I felt greatly flattered when the fastidious Panditji greeted me with an appreciative smile, remarking that the article was 'extremely well done'.

In the days that followed I noticed several things. One was Gandhiji's marvellous capacity to go on working day after day with only three or four hours' sleep—sometimes without any

sleep at all. The second was his precision and thoroughness in the littlest of little things. The third was his meticulous regard for cleanliness and neatness and his impatience with slovenliness in any shape or form—in thinking, writing, dress or daily life. The fourth was his military discipline and clock-work regularity, which he rigorously enforced in his own case and expected from those around him. The fifth was his habit, so far as possible, of doing everything for himself. If he wanted a paper to be looked up or a spittoon to be brought, he did it himself; he even mended his own clothes. He preferred writing to dictating. One day I counted 56 letters which he had written in his own hand. Each of them he carefully read from the date line to the final detail of the address before handing them for dispatch. At the end of it he was so exhausted that, pressing his throbbing temples between his two hands, he flung himself down on the hard floor just where he was sitting, without even spreading the bedding he was leaning against. He simply pushed it aside.

Gandhiji wrote with a steel nib from a country-made glass ink-pot which cost half an anna, and he used a red piece of khadi as a satchel in which to file his papers. His diet consisted of goat's milk, raisins and fruit and was measured out with a druggist's exactness and care. Once when I surreptitiously increased the number of raisins in his menu gradually from nineteen to twenty-three, he gave a sermon on the danger of blind affection. The menu for the next meal was regulated carefully according to how his system had responded to the previous meal, the amount of sleep he had or expected to have and the physical and mental strain already undergone or in prospect. He insisted on his desk being kept always clear. The daily post was distributed among his assistants as soon as it arrived and woe to the person who referred a letter to him more than two days old. Sometimes he would pick out for us letters containing knotty conundrums and himself check the replies. He deprecated finesse or a dialectician's tricks in the replies, and wanted the answers to be straight, clear and to the point. 'They must squarely meet the correspondent's difficulty', he insisted. But in case of disputatious correspondents who wrote to lay traps, he appreciated a clever, diplomatic reply or even a good retort, provided it was free from sting. Any reply of more than five or ten lines was rejected and consigned to the

waste-paper basket. The address was no less minutely scrutinized. Not to know, or not to be able to find with the help of a Bradshaw and the Posts and Telegraphs Guide the exact location of an out-of-the-way place in India was regarded as a culpable failure. Vagueness about train timings or routes was treated as another egregious failure. Deciphering bad handwriting provided a test of patience, perseverance, and resourcefulness. When the name of the place in an address baffled decipherment, Gandhiji recommended imitating the illegible handwriting as closely as possible! On another occasion, when the sender's name could not be deciphered, he suggested that it should be cut out from the original letter and pasted on to the address cover, adding, 'Postal people at the addressee's place will be able to make it out better!'

In the wake of all this came other lessons. First, a delicate consideration for the convenience of hosts: being late at meals was inexcusable *himsa*. At the same time, succumbing to the attention of fond and over-generous hosts was a sign of weakness of character. 'If you really want and insist on your hosts providing you with wholesome, simple diet, they will understand and have respect for you. If you succumb to their hospitality, they will enjoy it but secretly they will have contempt for you, and that rightly.' Gandhiji always expected us to remember, amidst the overflowing kindness and hospitality surrounding us everywhere, that India was a poor country where millions did not enjoy even two square meals. But he regarded being squeemish about drinking milk and eating even expensive fruit when it was easily available, as no less a sign of an unhealthy mental kink.

I noticed that, though an ascetic in his personal habits Gandhiji managed his asceticism with perfect artistry, without ever letting it become burdensome or a source of embarrassment to others. For instance, he always deprecated the 'tea and coffee' habit as being incompatible with simple living. But, knowing that some members of his entourage had that habit, he would on several occasions during railway journeys actually go out and fetch a tray of tea from the railway stall for his companions while they slept.

From Lucknow we went to Gujranwala and from there to Rawalpindi. During the return journey, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew

was travelling with us. Everybody in the compartment was fast asleep. In the middle of the night Gandhiji woke me up and asked what the next halt was. 'Gujarat', I replied.

'You know Dr Kitchlew is to get down at Gujranwala?' 'Yes.'

'Have you alerted him that he has to detrain at Gujranwala?'

I had not. 'Remember to wake him up at the next halt. He is in the adjacent compartment. He might be over-carried if nobody wakes him up in time. Remember he is our guest.' He again woke up soon after the train had passed Gujarat and made sure that his instructions had been duly carried out.

It was during this journey that news about a tragedy at Nankana Saheb was received and necessitated a visit to the site of that grim happening. In the course of his speech there, Gandhiji laid down a dictum which has since become a classic in the strategy of non-violence. It is not enough, he said, to eschew the use of force; the show of force must also be avoided. Anything that makes the opponent nervous is provocative violence and is therefore itself a species of violence.

Gandhiji had a wonderfully organized mind which he could switch off and on effortlessly at will. At Lahore he was asked by an English daily to give a statement on the Nankana Saheb tragedy when he was just starting for Ludhiana. 'Can your representative accompany me as far as . . .?' he asked. 'But it is only 40 minutes' run', the press chief replied. 'That will be enough for me' said Gandhiji. And sure as anything, five minutes before the train reached the next station, he had dashed off at white heat an open letter addressed to 'Khalsaji' and at the next halt handed it to the astounded press hound duly finished and revised—a classic of its kind. 'One must be able to command one's thinking as an expert horseman does the horse he rides', he remarked afterwards. He attributed this trait of his to *brahmacharya*, which meant much more to him than mere continence—complete control over all the senses and sense organs. 'Ordinarily our thoughts jostle chaotically in our mind. The discipline of *brahmacharya* enables one to order them and to exclude at will every unwanted thought, impulse or feeling. If we could do that we would not know what fatigue is. It is not work that kills, it is the chaos, the friction of ideas jostling in the mind that causes the wear and tear.'

Gandhiji had not yet resumed third class travelling—his state of health did not permit it after his recent illness. Nor did I ever see him at that time sit down to say the morning or evening prayers individually or with the rest while out of the Ashram. That came later, after his release from Yeravda prison in 1924.

Another little incident that occurred during this tour left an indelible impression on my mind. At Lahore, Gandhiji was staying with Lala Lajpat Rai. The lion of the Punjab had not yet fully accepted the non-co-operation programme. Some Punjab leaders came to Gandhiji and offered to take independent action under his leadership. But Gandhiji discountenanced the proposed move. The Punjab was Lalaji's province. He would not encourage or be party to any indiscipline in Lalaji's camp. It would be disloyalty to a colleague and this he had never been guilty of in his life. In the Punjab he would act only with and through Lalaji, he said. They must follow Lalaji's advice when it differed from his own. Lalaji was not present in the room when this conversation took place. But he overheard it from the adjoining room. So deeply moved was he by it that it laid the foundation of an indissoluble friendship between the two. Gandhiji maintained the same rigorous code of loyalty in respect of all comrades throughout his life.

At the end of the tour we returned to the Ashram at Sabarmati. To all appearances it was a dull, drab place, where from dawn till dusk people engaged in what looked like dull, commonplace chores and toiled like day labourers amidst a 'primitive' standard of amenities, till one came to the hard core of the Ashram disciplines on which all its activities were based and from which those activities derived their meaning. They were truth in thought, word and deed, non-violence, non-possession and non-stealing, chastity and its concomitant, control of the palate, swadeshi, self-sufficiency and self-reliance, and fearlessness—the foundation and the end-result of all these observances. All Ashram activities were means for the cultivation of these disciplines which, in their turn, were corollaries of the law of love, otherwise known as Truth. They were also lasting points on which the practice of the law of love is based.

In the Ashram there were several seasoned women Satyagrahis who, equipped with nothing more than a training in the Ashram's

basic discipline, had made history in South Africa; and a group of children, whom Gandhiji had put through their paces by making them run the gauntlet of Martial Law in South Africa as couriers, messengers and errand boys when they were just on the threshold of their teens. Not all who were drawn to the Ashram could see the inner meaning of the Ashram's way of life. Many a young man who came full of enthusiasm turned back disappointed because he found there 'not a trace of political commotion'!

After the evening prayer one day Gandhiji explained to us the importance of the Ashram's disciplines and the role that he envisaged for the Ashram in the national struggle for freedom. He looked forward to the day, he said, when he would call out by name one after another the inmates of the Ashram, trained in those disciplines, and send them to immolate themselves at the altar of non-violence. Unmoved, he would watch them fall before a shower of bullets, without a trace of fear or hatred, but only love in their hearts. And then, when the last one of them had fallen, he would himself follow. It would be a red-letter day in the Ashram's history, he said, when its trees would be the only witnesses left to bear silent testimony to that supreme sacrifice. Then only would the ashramites have proved themselves worthy of the Ashram and the Ashram worthy of its name and of India.

In the evening, accompanied by a number of us, Gandhiji used to go out for a stroll, which usually ended at the gate of Sabarmati Central Prison. Pointing to it one day, he remarked with a laugh, 'This is our other Ashram'. He later explained: 'In our Ashram there are no walls. The only walls we have are those of Ashram disciplines. But, unlike the prison walls, they do not imprison but protect us and release us into greater freedom. It is only when we observe spiritual disciplines voluntarily that we experience real freedom. Armed with them, we can go anywhere, face any emergency and never feel baffled. For instance, our life in the Ashram is supposed to be harder than prison life. We have no possessions of which anyone can deprive us. Imprisoned, we shall miss no delights of the palate or any other physical indulgence, having accustomed ourselves to plain fare and the simple life. We shall fear none because we shall have learnt to walk in the fear of God only, and we shall gladly die bearing

witness to truth; we shall never repudiate it. And since in prison a civil resister voluntarily observes the prison discipline and welcomes the hardships incidental to jail life as a part of suffering for truth, we shall feel happy and free like a bird even behind the prison walls, we shall never weary. When the whole of India has learnt this lesson, India shall be free. For, if the alien power then turns the whole country into a prison, it will not be able to imprison its soul.'

The distance that separated the two 'Ashrams' was hardly ten furlongs. But it took us as many years qualifying to get there and for the two to interchange their respective roles. In 1930 His Majesty's prisons became Ashrams to the Indian nationalists, and the whole country a vast prison. Inspired by Gandhiji's teaching the masses of India rose in a non-violent revolt against alien rule. The British rulers had to come to terms with them. The alternative was the peace of the grave. This the conscience of the civilized world was not prepared at that juncture to tolerate. The ruling power shrank from it and resorted, instead, to subtler methods which, however, did not avail for long.

1948

When Gandhiji Returned Empty-Handed

'I admit that I have come back empty-handed, but I have the satisfaction that I have not lowered or in any way compromised the honour of the flag that was entrusted to me. It has been my constant concern and prayer that I may not in an unguarded moment betray myself into an act of weakness or the trust that has reposed in me.' In these memorable words Gandhiji summed up the result of his mission on his return from the second Round Table Conference. Some time afterwards, a British statesman who had shown a keen desire to be friendly towards Gandhiji, Lord Sankey, expressed regret that during his stay in England Gandhiji had surrounded himself with 'churchmen, cranks and faddists' instead of making the best of his opportunity by cultivating the friendship of leading figures in British politics. It only showed a lack of perception of the essence of Gandhiji's mission and of his approach. If he had gone out for a 'political deal', Sankey's criticism would be justified. Gandhiji's object, however, was to win British understanding and sympathy and convert the British people so that they might undo the wrong done to India and begin a new chapter in the history of Indo-British relations. If a century-old feud between England and India could be composed without resort to carnage and bloodshed, it would be a glorious triumph for the principle of non-violence and a forerunner of the establishment of world peace.

Gandhiji had therefore to explain India to the British, and explain India's non-violent struggle, the background of that struggle—British exploitation, in which all of them directly or indirectly participated—and the consequent appalling poverty, disease and degradation of the people of India. 'Do you wish to prosper by stealing the bread from the mouth of the Indian spinner and weaver and their hungry children? It is for them I speak', he said to the Lancashire mill operatives. And they understood the Indian boycott of Lancashire goods and their

womenfolk presented him their infants-in-arms to be blessed. He spoke to the East-Enders, their pastors and guardians about the self-purification and constructive side of India's non-violent struggle, the curse of the drink and drug evil which the British Government were trying to defend and perpetuate, and the fight against it of India's men, women and children through the method of self-suffering. He told them of India's starving millions who had only salt as their condiment and what the salt tax meant to them. He told them of India's struggle to purge the evil of untouchability, which the Congress had adopted as a plank in its programme and the reparation which Hindu society was trying to make for its past sins. Finally, he made the British realize their kinship with India's famished millions by living in their midst, and by that symbolic gesture identifying himself with them. They saw incarnated in the example of his life the ideals of simplicity, voluntary poverty, purity and dedication to God's work, and understood that these formed the basis of India's non-violent struggle which was charged with enmity to none and goodwill towards all.

To keep alive the bond of identity with the poor, Gandhiji spun regularly every day without fail. The whole day he was unceasingly busy and returned to Kingsley Hall sometimes after midnight. Once he actually arrived there at 2.30 a.m., sat down for his half hour's daily sacrificial spinning and was again up at 4 for the morning prayers and the day's endless round as usual. As he had refused to adjust his watch to the official time when the clocks were advanced by half an hour, it meant slicing off another half hour from his scanty sleep.

Gandhiji sent us to help our hosts in the kitchen and it was a privilege for us, and a joy to them, to jointly peel potatoes, cut vegetables and clean dishes. We joined them in their silent prayers and he himself watched their Saturday evening entertainments when they sang and danced together. 'Mr Gandhi, won't you join us in our country dances', he was asked on one occasion. He laughingly replied, 'Yes, certainly'; and then added, pointing to the stick in his hand, 'this shall be my partner', and everybody joined in the laugh. On another occasion he rebuked one of our party when she, with a new convert's zeal, expressed a puritanic horror of the dancing. 'You must realize', he told her, 'this is their innocent recreation. We need to have an

understanding and appreciation of the way of life of those with whom we want to mix. You should not forget that folk-dancing is an ancient, established English institution, an integral part of English national life.'

Gandhiji visited the English in their slums and encouraged us to mix with them in street-corner six-penny luncheon-restaurants, milk bars, playhouses and places of recreation. He asked us to tramp at least sixteen miles a day (which alas, we could ill afford to do for lack of time!), to make friends with British bobbies, to study British institutions, the museums, libraries and art galleries; above all, British national habits—their punctuality, corporate and individual discipline and their way of life in general. He himself worked hard and unremittingly, slept little and lived only on a diet of fruit, raw vegetables, dates and an ounce or so of almond paste. He closely scrutinized the price of every thing he ate—even a pear or a plum that he partook of. Never shall I forget the trouncing I received when, in all innocence, I purchased a small phial of honey for six pence for Gandhiji. He gave me a lecture for over half-an-hour, narrating how he economized on every farthing; how, as a student, he had only bread, cocoa and an apple for his evening meal, and how the only example of wastefulness which he still remembered with remorse was the loss of a penny at a grocer's counter when he forgot to ask for the balance of a two-penny piece after the purchase of his daily ration of an apple. When I pleaded ignorance of prices in a new place, I received this further rebuke: 'This should have made you all the more careful. You should have realized that you were purchasing on behalf of a representative of the poor. A representative of the poor has to be a trustee for them. Ignorance or carelessness in a trustee is criminal.' And he poured out his soul's anguish over what he had himself seen of the condition of 'the skeletons of Orissa', how it haunted him in his waking hours as well as in his sleep and how his faith in the ultimate goodness of God alone sustained him. His voice grew husky and tears stood in his eyes as he uttered these words. Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Sir Prabhashanker Pattani, who witnessed the scene, sat transfixed with amazement at his soul's agony and I had burnt into me a lesson for life.

The significance of all this was not lost on the East-Enders.

They instinctively recognized Gandhiji as one of themselves and realized that he symbolized the struggle of the common man which was as much theirs as India's. Churchmen were made to see that India's non-violent struggle represented the gospel of Jesus in action, and as men of religion it was their duty not to subserve the temporal power but to serve as a reproving rod when that power forgot its duty or abused its might. Undaunted, they must stand for truth and justice only and therefore for India's righteous cause.

Gandhiji exemplified his utter indifference to the pomp and circumstance of royalty when he refused to alter his mode of dress, even to substitute a newly washed shawl for the one he was wearing when he attended the Buckingham Palace ceremonial reception. He satisfied himself with only turning his shawl inside out! He was equally outspoken with the King. The latter told Gandhiji that he was a 'good man' when they met in South Africa and up to 1918, but then something went wrong. Gandhiji maintained a dignified silence. When, however, the King asked him, 'Why did you boycott my son?' he replied, 'Not your son, Your Majesty, but the official representative of the British Crown.' Further, when the King proceeded to tell him that a rebellion could not be tolerated and had to be put down to keep the King's Government going, Gandhiji did not allow the statement to go unchallenged even though it proceeded from the lips of the King Emperor. With his characteristic courtesy but firmness he rejoined, 'Your Majesty will not expect me, your guest, to enter into a political argument with you.'

Gandhiji was equally plainspoken with Mussolini. The latter ingratiatingly asked him whether he would not like free India to have Il Duce's Italy as a friend. Ignoring the bait, Gandhiji replied that the free India of his conception would not only like to be friendly and at peace with Italy alone but with the whole world. The Fascist dictator then asked with a veiled sneer whether he expected to win independence for India through non-violence, and what he thought of the Fascist militarist state which Italy had built. With disconcerting frankness Gandhiji told him that, as he saw it, the dictator was only building a house of cards.

Then there was the episode of the 'Gyda Interview', published in *Gironale L'Italia*. It was a pure fabrication. Romain Rolland,

whose guest Gandhiji was at Villeneuve, had feared some such trick and warned him not to see anybody in Italy without the presence of a trustworthy third-party witness. There was no question of Gandhiji planning civil disobedience in advance, as alleged by Senator Gyda, for Gandhiji was trying, not without hope, to find out whether something could still not be rescued from the wreckage of the second Round Table Conference. The reply, when it came, left ample room for optimism. But Simla was not prepared to take any chances, and before the *S.S. Pilsna* touched Indian shores, the British had queered the pitch by arresting Pandit Jawaharlal, Badshah Khan and Mr T. A. K. Sherwani. Within a week of Gandhiji's arrival, most Congress leaders were once more behind prison walls and Ordinance Rule was in full swing.

As an illustration of Gandhiji's anxiety to be scrupulously correct over every little act in terms of *ahimsa*, an incident may be mentioned. Two English detectives, Rogers and Evans, were detailed by the British Government to look after Gandhiji's security. They came to develop a deep regard and affection for him personally and won his heart by their competence, goodwill and devotion to duty. When parting, Gandhiji asked, and Sir Samuel Hoare gladly acceded to his request, for the two to be allowed to accompany him as far as Brindisi. At the farewell there, Gandhiji told Rogers and Evans that he would be sending them British-made silver watches as tokens of their friendship.

On reaching Bombay the crisis that had been precipitated by the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, refusing to discuss the question of the arrest of Congress leaders at once engulfed Gandhiji. The Working Committee of the Congress outlined a plan of non-violent struggle which included the boycott of English goods. While it was still deliberating over that resolution, Gandhiji sent me to purchase the promised watches for the English detectives. 'And they must be British made', he charged me. After scouring the whole of Bombay I returned in the afternoon with a crateful of silver watches, but they were all Swiss made. British watches were nowhere available. But Gandhiji insisted: 'They must be British made'. The draft of the resolution for the boycott of British goods that the Working Committee had discussed in the morning lay before him and its adoption in the afternoon sitting of the Working Committee

was, more or less, a certainty. What was the point, under the circumstances of his insistence on 'British made', I asked. 'Don't you see the resolution has not yet been adopted', he replied. 'There must not therefore be on my part even a suggestion of discrimination against British goods.'

'But you know that, by all human calculation, that resolution is going to be adopted.'

'All the more reason why I should give expression to my love for the British while I may,' he rejoined.

So I set out on my expedition again and in the evening succeeded in obtaining two British silver watches, probably the only such watches to be had in Bombay. He autographed them at the back and I had the autograph engraved. Then only were the watches sent to be presented to the detectives on his behalf.

On the political side, Gandhiji left no stone unturned either. He did all that was possible for anyone to do. In a personal note sent after hearing his first speech in the Federal Structure Committee, Sir Geoffrey Corbett, Secretary of the Indian Delegation, wrote: 'As I listened to the words of wisdom that dropped from your lips yesterday, I felt proud to belong to a delegation of which you are a member.' Referring to these extempore and very often unpremeditated utterances of Gandhiji in the Conference, the Special Representative of the *New York Times* wrote that it had introduced them to a way of speech which would become familiar to the world before the Conference was over. But the dice was too heavily loaded against Gandhiji. The Tories had made up their minds not to relax the hold on India and, with that end in view, had especially sought and obtained the India portfolio in Ramsay MacDonald's Government. They were not going to be deprived of their prize.

Traps were laid for Gandhiji in the Conference which the opponents of India's freedom probably did not expect him to surmount. After signing the 'Minorities Pact', when Dr B. R. Ambedkar presented his claim for separate electorate for Harijans, a gleeful whisper went round in high die-hard circles that Gandhi was finished. The stage had been carefully set. Even before the event, cabled instructions began pouring in from distant America for press correspondents to confront the self-proclaimed 'champion' of the 'untouchables' with the contradiction between his claim and his opposition to the Harijans' demand for

adequate political representation. The premature jubilation became confusion when Gandhiji turned the tables completely upon them the next day in the Conference. By mercilessly dissecting the so-called Pact, which he showed was in reality an unholy plot, he so indicted the British Government for its complicity in it that it has never been able to exculpate itself.

General Smuts was at that time in England. He had come to preside over the Faraday Centenary Celebration and offered to prolong his stay in England if he could bring strength to Gandhiji's elbow and be of help. He exhausted his good offices, even seeing the King at Sandringham, but he returned disappointed. The wall of opposition in high places was impenetrable! Before that Smuts had paid a visit to 88 Knight's Bridge to see Gandhiji. Gandhiji was at that time away, but he had sent me in advance to receive the General and detain him till his arrival. I gave our distinguished visitor the latest news on developments. His comment was: 'These people [British statesmen] do not know their man. I know him, having fought him for eight years. I have told them that ultimately they have got to settle with him. He alone can deliver the goods.'

The fact is that on no account was the British Government prepared to part with power. Professor Lee Smith, who was Postmaster General in the Labour Cabinet, told Gandhiji frankly just before the end of the Conference, 'You can't have more at present. This represents the measure of your power today according to our assessment.' David Lloyd George was even more frank. He said, 'If you want more, you have to make good your claim by civil disobedience and non-co-operation in which, on my part, I promise full sympathy and support.'

What more could Gandhiji do? What could anybody do? And what difference would it have made in any case? Although his labours in the Conference failed in their immediate objective, the good seed sown by his work outside the Conference continued to bear fruit.

What difference does it make?—the sceptic may ask. What weight can the dissent of a few 'eccentrics' carry with those who shape the policies of the state? To argue thus would be to betray ignorance of the dynamics of social change. These minute variations in the consciousness of the ordinary people, under the impact of intelligent, innocent suffering have a highly infectious

quality. Soon, rather than late, they are inevitably reflected in the thinking of men at the helm of affairs. Imponderable in themselves, they transform the milieu and create compulsions that change the course of events silently and unseen, just as slight movements of the ship's rudder, hardly perceptible to the eye, change the direction of a ship's motion. What Gandhiji did on this occasion laid the foundation of what culminated at the time of the transfer of power in 'a treaty of peace without war; a victory without the sting of defeat'.

1944

On the Road to Simla

On the morning of Thursday last and in soaking wet weather, Gandhiji set out with a small entourage from his mud cottage at Sevagram for Simla, in response to the Viceregal invitation. It had been pouring the whole of the previous day and during the night, turning the road into a strip of soft, pulpy mass, so that almost till the last moment it was uncertain as to whether any transport would be available to convey the travelling kit of the party to the railway station. Apart from these difficulties and anxieties over Gandhiji's health, which can ill bear exposure to wind and weather, Gandhiji, as is well known, is extremely loath these days to absent himself from Sevagram even for a short while. Nevertheless, he gladly responded to the Viceregal invitation as part of his *sadhana* for *ahimsa*. He knew he was going without any expectations. The railway journey was fatiguing to a degree, so that when he boarded the car at Kalka he was ready to doze off again and 'reel off a few score miles of sleep', as he put it.

Before the car had proceeded a couple of furlongs, however, a trifling incident happened which converted the journey into one of those occasions which leave a lasting imprint. Without any premeditation or forethought, I casually dropped a remark which was in the nature of expressing a grievance against a colleague. The grievance was well-founded and merited redress, but I proceeded to generalize upon it, and that brought down the avalanche: 'You have indulged in an unpardonable generalization. A seeker after truth cannot afford to do that', remonstrated Gandhiji. 'Darwin for the greater part of his book *The Origin of the Species* has simply massed fact upon fact without any theorizing, and only towards the end has formulated his conclusion which, because of the sheer weight of testimony behind it, becomes almost irresistible. Yet you have criticized even Darwin's generalization as being unwarranted. Science

tells us that a proposition may hold good in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases and yet fail in the thousandth case and thus be rendered untenable as a universal statement. That is why in Jain philosophy so much stress is laid on *syadvad*. A proposition must not only be able to satisfy the analytical test, but must also be proved conversely by synthesis before its universal validity can be established. And you have dared to build a sweeping indictment on the strength of a single fact.'

I was forced to admit that my generalization was unscientific and therefore unwarranted. But in my heart of hearts I was sorry only for my indiscretion. I felt I had intrinsically a strong case, which I could easily make good on another occasion and under better auspices. Besides, I did not want to rob Gandhiji of his much-needed sleep by prolonging the discussion. I kept mum. But I was not destined to enjoy my self-complacence for long. Gandhiji continued: 'Your criticism of . . . is in a way true and yet it is not wholly true. It savours of lack of charity. It takes no count of the difficulties incident to one's birth and upbringing. It is up to those who have gathered round me in quest of a common ideal to make due allowance for the temperamental shortcomings of one another and strive to break down prejudices by the exercise of forbearance and magnanimity, and through loving service.'

I felt stung to the quick. I had, with good reason, held myself to be the aggrieved party, and here the tables were being turned on me. I protested: 'You know the utter contempt in which this friend holds me, the campaign of calumny to which I have been subjected. Yet I have never retaliated. I have never given any cause for complaint. I have even consciously striven—not without some success—to befriend this friend and make myself agreeable. And yet. . . .' 'I know all that', interrupted Gandhiji, 'I know your grievance is well-founded. You do not know the flattening out I gave . . . for the wrong done to you, and I know too your striving to be friendly, of which I have myself been witness. My complaint is not that your conduct was not correct; the question is whether there was overflowing love behind it. You refer to the contempt you have experienced. Was there not hauteur behind what you have described as your "correct conduct", a sort of "superior person" attitude that regards the opponent as beneath contempt or even retaliation? If you search

within yourself, you will find that the feeling that has filled you all along has been that of the wrong you have suffered, not that of pity for or sympathy with the wrong-doer who, in turn, is a victim of circumstances, and is not unaware of this defect in question; I know . . . has striven too to overcome them. But one's innate nature is not so easily overcome. The momentum of the past proves too strong for us. Such cases deserve our pity, not anger. It is only thus that I am today able to extend my sympathy to the Princes. Although I have often criticized them unsparingly, there is in me that basic understanding of their position, and my heart goes out to them. I fancy that they, too, realize that in me they have a friend. You talk of contempt, but don't you see that, if your heart were flowing with *ahimsa*, contempt won't touch you? There was hardly an individual held in such contempt among certain circles as the late Deenabandhu Andrews. Yet he seemed hardly to be aware of it, and acted towards those who spitefully used him with an ease and naturalness that broke down all barriers and made him irresistible. If there was no contempt or hatred in question, where would be the occasion for the exercise of *ahimsa*?

'I admit it is my weakness', I fumbled, 'that has prevented me from befriending more effectively.' 'I am afraid it is one's own sense of inferiority which makes one so sensitive to the feeling of contempt. There have been occasions when I have had an insight into the spiritual isolation and forlornness, the inner starvation and dreariness of. . . . On these occasions I was so deeply moved that I went out of my way to serve and befriend him, feeling neither embarrassment, nor even my habitual awkwardness. The fear of contempt did not deter me, and my wooing was successful.' To Gandhiji this was a case of love casting out fear. 'When we are afraid', he tells us, 'it is our *ahimsa* that is at fault. Love and weakness cannot coexist'.

Gandhiji had retired within himself. He introspectively resumed: 'In the ultimate analysis I feel that it is *ahimsa* that is at fault. Otherwise, why should not my word go straight home, why should there be discord and disharmony about me in my little world in Sevagram? If my experiment here were successful and I could find a solution for the little problems that confront me here, I am sure the same formula would provide me a solution for the bigger issues that today face us in the country.

That is why I am so reluctant to leave Sevagram. It is my laboratory for Satyagraha. It is there that I expect to discover the key to India's independence, not in Simla or in New Delhi. I sometimes feel like taking shelter in flight, not to seek cloistered peace, but in the stillness of utter isolation to know myself, to see where I stand, to catch more effectively the faint whispering of the "still small voice within". Then alone would my experiment in *ahimsa* be complete.'

I was smitten into a sense of my utter unworthiness to be associated with the great experiment in which Gandhiji was engaged. With such poor instruments to work with, is it any wonder that Satyagraha has not forged farther ahead than it has today? I felt utterly miserable. Automatically the episode of the contrite Ancient Mariner came back to my mind,

And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep away.

1940

The Way of Satyagraha

At the end of five days of heart-to-heart talks with Muslim friends, often continuing till midnight, and shorter talks with the Bhayats—and having failed with them—Gandhiji put his signature to the letter to the Thakore Saheb submitting seven names from the list of the Sardar's representatives. His hand shook as he did so. He never dreamt at the time that within thirty-six hours of the dispatch of his letter his faith in God and *ahimsa* would be put to test. Ever since his arrival here on his mission of peace Gandhiji had made it a point to hold daily the congregational evening prayer on the Rashtriya Shala grounds. The practice was kept up during the fast.

On the evening of the 16th instant a report was brought to Gandhiji that the Bhayats and Mussalmans of Rajkot were going to hold a black flag demonstration at the evening prayer. There was also a report that a garland of shoes had been got ready for the occasion. He made light of the fears of those who brought the report. He had full faith in the Mussalman and Bhayat leaders who had had friendly discussions with him during the last five days. But in case the worst came to the worst he would welcome it, he said. Accordingly, he gave peremptory instructions that anybody approaching him, no matter with what intent, should be given free access and not obstructed in any way.

Gandhiji motored as usual to the Rashtriya Shala prayer ground. Almost simultaneously, the demonstrators, too, numbering about 600, arrived on the scene with black flags and placards bearing inscriptions, some of which were highly offensive. They lined the fence enclosing the prayerground from the main road. The Sardar happened to be away at Amreli that day and so missed the show.

Gandhiji bowed to the demonstrators, as is his wont, before he sat down for the prayer, which was conducted as usual.

Throughout the period the prayer was in progress, the processionists kept up an unseemly demonstration of shouting and yelping. The creation of disturbances at prayer time, under the very eyes of the Bhayats and Mussalman representatives who had sat with him in conference only the other day, was for Gandhiji the 'unkindest cut of all'. The prayer over, he rose to go. The demonstrators had by now begun to pour in through the entrance of the narrow passage leading to the prayer ground. Gandhiji, instead of going by car as usual, decided to walk through the crowd so as to give the demonstrators full chance to say or do to him whatever they pleased. At the entrance the crush was too great to allow further progress. The pushing and jostling by the demonstrators at the rear on either side of the gangway was growing apace. The dust and the din added to the confusion. Friends tried to form a protective cordon. But Gandhiji waved them off. 'I shall sit here or go alone in their midst', he told them. Suddenly he was seized by an attack of indescribable pain in the region of the waist, and felt as if he would faint. This is an old symptom that seizes Gandhiji whenever he receives an acute mental shock. For a time he stood in the midst of that jostling crowd motionless and silent, his eyes shut, supporting himself on his staff, and tried to seek relief through silent prayer, a remedy that has never failed him on such an occasion. As soon as he had sufficiently recovered, he reiterated his resolve to go through the demonstrators all alone. He addressed a Bhayat, who stood confronting him and who, he subsequently learned, was besides a police officer in plain clothes: 'I wish to go under your sole protection, not that of my co-workers'. Some Bhayats had already noticed his condition. They now bade the rest to make way for him, and leaning on the shoulder of the Bhayat friend in question, Gandhiji walked to the waiting car. 'This is the way of Satyagraha', he remarked as the car drove off, 'to put your head unresistingly into the lap of your "enemy", for him to keep or make short work of you just as he pleases. It is the sovereign way, and throughout my half-a-century of varied experience it has never once failed me.'

Two Mussalman representatives from the Civil Station came to see Gandhiji soon after, according to previous appointment. 'You were less than fair to yourself and to us in exposing

yourself to such a risk. Anything may happen in a motley crowd', they remarked, with reference to the happenings of the evening. In reply, Gandhiji described for them how such risk-taking had become part and parcel of his life. There were at least half a dozen occasions in South Africa and in India when he had risked his life like that, and he had never regretted doing so. In all the cases the assailant or the would-be assailants had ended by becoming his friends. 'But should the worst happen after all', he concluded, 'what privilege can be greater for a Satyagrahi than to fall with a prayer in his heart for those whom he wanted to serve but who under a delusion took him for an "enemy"?'

1939

Gandhiji's Last Experiment— Sevagram Ashram

In 1940 Gandhiji was staying at Birla House in Bombay when he received a letter from Lord Lothian, who had just arrived in that city, asking for an appointment. Gandhiji invited him to come and meet him at Sevagram. When I asked him the reason for this, he said: 'The words that I wish to speak to Lord Lothian would not come to me in my present surroundings, and even if I spoke to him those words they would fail to convey to him my meaning'. Lord Lothian came and stayed in Sevagram Ashram for three days. He dined in the common mess like all the rest. He was served home-made wholemeal raised bread, plain steamed fresh vegetables and fruit grown in the Ashram, and milk and butter from the Ashram dairy. He was delighted. 'It reminds me of my brother's farm', he remarked, 'where he also practised the simple life.'

To greet Lothian on his arrival, Gandhiji had sent my sister, Sushila, with a thistle plume to put into his button hole. By a curious coincidence, when Lothian was decorated some time later by the British Government, the honour conferred upon him was 'The Order of the Thistle'!

Like many other momentous things in Gandhiji's life, the Sevagram experiment was not the result of a preconceived plan. It came his way in the natural course and he welcomed it as a duty that God had ordained for him. He implicitly believed in Cardinal Henry Newman's line, 'One step enough for me'. His whole life was fashioned on that principle.

On the eve of his historic Dandi March in 1930, Gandhiji had made a momentous declaration. He would not return to his Ashram at Sabarmati till Swaraj was attained. On his return from prison in 1933, therefore, and at the invitation of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj—his 'fifth son' as Gandhiji affectionately called

him—he settled down in Wardha. Jamnalalji munificently gifted Gandhiji his orchard-bungalow at Maganwadi to enable him to carry on his work.

In prison, Gandhiji had conceived several new ideas to help the nation recuperate from the severe economic and spiritual exhaustion resulting from two Civil Disobedience campaigns coming in quick succession. One of these ideas was the revival of India's dead or dying indigenous cottage crafts, as an extension of and a natural sequel to the resurrection of the spinning wheel and khadi. To work this out, he established the All-India Village Industries Association. Another pertained to social cleanliness and was directed against untouchability. Believing that to affect any reform worth the name the reformer must begin with himself as the first convert, Gandhiji started, among other things, going out every morning with a party of co-workers equipped with buckets and brooms, to sweep and clean the pathways in the adjacent village of Sindi. This went on for several months. The plan misfired. At first people were apathetic. Gradually they became resistant and even resentful of the attempted reform. Mira Behn then had a brain wave. To overcome the resistance of the village folk she decided to become a villager herself, built herself a hut in Sindi and began to live there. But the attitude of the village folk, instead of improving, worsened. They even began to persecute her. Mira Behn declared that Sindi was not a 'real village', but only a 'suburb of Wardha' and this was what had vitiated her experiment. She began to search for a 'real village', and ultimately hit upon Sevagram.

Knowing Mira Behn's impulsive and wayward temperament, which prevented her from sticking to one thing or one place for any length of time—a trait which she traced to a gypsy strain in her blood—Gandhiji tried at first to dissuade her from her resolve, but ultimately yielded to her importunity on one condition. The village-folk had a deep mistrust of educated, city-bred people who went to them to 'reform' and 'elevate' them. They had had enough of the 'do-gooders', who descended upon them like seasonal birds at harvest time and then suddenly disappeared. She must go to live and, if need be, die there. If she fell ill and could not cure herself, she would have to leave. He would not let her die there, but he would himself step into the breach to keep the plighted word on her behalf with the villagers.

Mira Behn built herself a hut by the side of a well *in the heart of the village*. This was mistake number one. Before long, she fell ill. Gandhiji sent her to live in the village of Varoda close by, and decided to take up his residence in Segaoon (as Sevagram was then called). Segaoon formed part of Jamnalalji's zamindari. He owned an eleven-sixteenth share in it. It offered all the facilities. There was a beautiful orchard and a well with crystal-clear water. The local population, consisting of cultivators and day-labourers, numbered only about six hundred. Most of them were Harijans.

'I would stay in a hut built for the purpose in Segaoon with Ba [Kasturba Gandhi], or alone if she wished to stay away', Gandhiji wrote in one of his letters to Jamnalalji. 'The hut should be built as inexpensively as possible, say, with not more than Rs 100. If I need any help I would like to obtain it from Segaoon itself. I may have to visit Maganwadi off and on. For this I shall use whatever transport is locally available.' On the last day of May 1936, early in the morning at 5 o'clock, Gandhiji trekked forth on a preliminary visit to his new abode. A shelter had been improvised for him under a guava tree beside a well by enclosing three sides of a small space of 10×12 feet with woven wattle. A mat of split bamboo overhead served to keep out the sun. A pit latrine, a bathroom and a kitchen were improvised in somewhat the same manner. Cooking was done in an earthen pot placed over three stone boulders to serve as a stove, with brushwood fire underneath.

The evening prayer was held in the village itself. All the villagers joined in. After the prayer Gandhiji explained to the villagers assembled the object of his coming to settle in their midst. His remarks being explained to them, the village Patel spoke as follows: 'Mahatmaji, we are very happy you have come here to stay in our midst. We shall carry out all your biddings except in the matter of mixing with Harijans.' Gandhiji laughed at the unsophisticated frankness of the village elder. This Patel later became Gandhiji's ardent follower. While the prayer meeting was in progress, two men from the village were brought to him. They had quarrelled. One had smashed the head of the other and the injured man was covered with blood. Those who had brought him wanted to hand over the case to the police. Gandhiji said to them that this would help nobody. It would

only plant a feud in their midst, which would poison the life of the village for a long time to come. 'Why not forgive the offender and settle the matter among yourselves?' he suggested. His advice was accepted. The incident became the starting point of a new spirit of peace and goodwill in the village.

After the prayer, all those who had accompanied Gandhiji from Wardha were sent back. Only Kasturba Gandhi and I remained beside Gandhiji. The place was infested with snakes and scorpions. An oblong space was enclosed by trenches that had been dug to lay the foundation of the hut that was to be built for him. We walked into the enclosure by placing a plank across one of the trenches. This we withdrew after us, to insure reasonable safety against the poisonous reptiles. We slept under the starry heavens.

There was a ceaseless flow of visitors coming to see Gandhiji. They were all sent back as soon as their business was over, as not even elementary amenities like food and potable water could be offered for lack of facilities. Among the very first to come was Dr B. R. Ambedkar. His offer was to keep the Harijans within the Hindu fold. The price he demanded was revision of the Yeravda Pact. Gandhiji told him that, according to his lights, religion could not be a matter of barter, but he was always prepared to consider any disability of the Harijans on its merits. After a week Gandhiji left for Nandi Hills in Mysore for a short stay, and returned from there on 16 June to take up residence in Segaon permanently. A mud hut had in the meantime been erected for him, but its floor was still damp in spite of the desperate attempts by Gandhiji's co-workers to dry it by placing pans of live charcoal on it. There had been a heavy downpour during the day, and it was thought that Gandhiji would not risk a journey to Segaon that evening. But with the weather clearing a little when his train arrived at Wardha railway station, Gandhiji set forth on foot for his village home, only to be overtaken by a torrential downpour, and reached his destination soaked to the skin. He was shivering, and it was feared he might catch a chill, but he would not let a charcoal stove be lit in his hut, maintaining that that was the best way of inviting a cold.

The new residence was an adobe structure with a tiled roof, supported by cross-beams resting on the mud walls. There was a running verandah in front and at two sides, and another one at

the rear with a kitchenette and small bathrooms at each of the two ends. In this room, Gandhiji worked and rested, along with eight other inmates, including Kasturba. She, poor lady, did not have even a shred of privacy. The utmost concession that could be wrung for her was to have a small corner in one of the end verandahs curtained off to serve as a dressing room. Later, Jamnalalji Bajaj had a separate small hut erected for her. Even this she could hardly call her own. When women visitors came to the Ashram to see Gandhiji and sometimes to stay in the Ashram, she, with her characteristic generosity, put her hut at their disposal.

There was no post-office at Segaon. The daily post had to be brought from Wardha and sent for dispatch by special messenger everyday. The mail used to be very heavy. Mahadev Desai had been left behind with his family at Wardha and would dispose of the bulk of the post and then walk every afternoon to Segaon with such post as needed Gandhiji's personal attention. There were no assistants for a considerable time to begin with. At one stage, the burden of cooking for all the members of the group and the guests, preparing Gandhiji's food, giving him his daily massage and bath, and assisting in clearing the correspondence fell on my shoulders. The place was notoriously unhealthy. The incidence of illness began to increase. Soon there were four patients, including Mira Behn, two being cases of enteric fever, and only two persons (besides Gandhiji)—Professor Bhansali and I, available for all purposes. Since the patients were treated according to Gandhiji's method of nature-cure, the nurses were kept busy round the clock, with the enemas, sponge baths, steam inhalations, wet-sheet packs and mud-packs, and so on. Sometimes it fell to Gandhiji to administer the enemas and the sponge baths, while I, or Professor Bhansali, cleaned the slop basins and the commodes. At other times I administered the enemas and the sponge baths while Professor J. P. Bhansali and Gandhiji cleaned the commodes. On top of it, Gandhiji was very particular that the daily mail be disposed of regularly and copy for the *Harijan* got ready for dispatch without fail to reach the publishers in time for the weekly issue. To our great satisfaction all the patients recovered without the help of any doctor from outside.

After we had been at Segaon for some time Gandhiji himself was laid up with malaria. The infection was so heavy that there

was every danger of his developing cerebral malaria. Dr Jivraj Mehta in Bombay was consulted on the trunk telephone and took a very grave view of the situation, with the result that Gandhiji had to be rushed to the Civil Hospital at Wardha. One day, while he was still convalescing in the Civil Hospital, Shri Chowdhury, the District Magistrate of Wardha, came with live poisonous snakes—their fangs and venom-sacks intact—a krait, a viper, a hooded cobra and, finally, a *takshak*. He placed the cobra around Gandhiji's neck and the viper and krait on his lap. We watched with our hearts in our mouths when the viper tried to slither up his bare chest. When its keeper tried to remove it, it showed signs of vexation, and began to hiss. Gandhiji sat stock still like a stone image without moving a muscle. Ultimately, Shri Chowdhury stroked the back of the intractable creature in a particular way. It was soothed and again became docile.

Gandhiji's interest in snakes was related to his attitude to *ahimsa*. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* affirms that when *ahimsa* is fully manifested in an individual even wild beasts like tigers, snakes and scorpions shed their natural fierceness and become harmless. Gandhiji literally believed in the truth of that aphorism and had set his heart on testing and demonstrating the truth of it. In consequence, it had always been his endeavour to carry his *ahimsa* even unto snakes and scorpions. Thus, at the Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa and in the Satyagraha Ashrams both at Sabarmati and Sevagram, he was constantly engaged in devising ways of dealing with snakes without killing them. This was not because he unconsciously identified them with white settlers in South Africa, the mill-owners at Sabarmati or the British Raj in Sevagram, as has been suggested by Erikson, the author of *Gandhi's Truth*. Some time after his return from the hospital, Kailash Nath Kaul, the brother of Kamala Nehru, paid us a visit in the Ashram. He had been interested in snakes since his schooldays. On Gandhiji's bidding, he began to initiate us into snake lore. He taught us to distinguish poisonous varieties of snakes from the non-poisonous—there being only four varieties of snakes that are poisonous out of the 420 odd that have so far been identified in India. We learnt to catch the snakes by means of a noose attached to a bamboo stick. They were then taken to a distant place and deported. One of Vinobaji's pupils became an expert in catching cobras and vipers with his

bare hands. Gandhiji had several cages specially made for keeping snakes under observation and study. One snake, a very large one, had a glass window besides wire gauze frames on the sides and a sliding panel to segregate the snake inside the cage. This cage was somehow never put to the use for which it was meant. I have a recollection that, ultimately, it was used by Kasturba to keep the curd and butter that was prepared from goat's milk for Gandhiji's use!

Other experiments initiated by Gandhiji were the making of *tal gud* and bread. Both of these were entrusted to me. No one in the locality at that time knew the art of preparing *tal gud* from palm juice. The initial experiments were dismal failures, as unglazed pots were used to collect the juice, which soaked into their porous walls and started fermenting. It was after long experimentation that the cause of the failure was discovered and the right remedy found. In the bread-making experiment Gandhiji had a hand. Wholemeal bread was prepared without an oven, over an open fire and without the use of yeast. Gandhiji would humorously call it 'our joint patent', it became very popular, and had the distinction of being certified by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru after he sampled it during his visit to Sevagram as being 'the best I have eaten anywhere in the world'. He even had Gandhiji send him the recipe for it.

Gandhiji had not come to Segaon with any cut-and-dried plan. He did not even wish to found an Ashram. The whole village henceforth should be our Ashram, he said. The name Ashram, however, stuck to it in spite of him. And a strange kind of Ashram it was, without any constitution or even set rules and regulations, except such as grew out of the day-to-day experience of community living. The whole idea was that he, with his co-workers, should live there as a villager of his dreams ought to live, associate the villagers with the community life of the Ashram in as many ways as possible, and let the leaven of his example permeate their lives. The community kitchen was manned by Harijans. They learnt the art of preparing conservative and hygienic food. It was served to the inmates and the guests without any distinction of caste, creed, colour or sex. The Harijan helpers joined in the Ashram prayers and took part in all its activities. Sometimes they sang hymns at prayer time and held *kirtans* in the village, to which all were invited.

A Harijan from Andhra, who had been converted to Christianity, came to live in the Ashram and found in the universality of the Ashram prayer the essence of religion. By his austerity, devotion and spirit of sacrifice and service he won everybody's heart. He used to conduct the Ashram prayers, and also officiated as the priest of the community. All the marriages in the Ashram were solemnized by him, including that of Gandhiji's grand-nephew Kanu.

Like the rules and regulations of the Ashram, its activities, too, grew out naturally under changing circumstances. Dr G. L. Batra, a retired Deputy Director of Public Health, Bengal, on coming to Sevagram to stay with Gandhiji, found that nearly 60 per cent of the children of the village were suffering from *kerato malacia*—a deficiency disease caused by the lack of vitamin A. He mentioned this to Gandhiji who acted immediately. A pharmaceutical firm had sent Gandhiji a big can of red palm oil as a substitute for cod liver oil. This, and skimmed-milk from a small dairy that he had started in the Ashram were placed at Dr Batra's disposal. Dr Batra collected all the children in the village and began to give six ounces of skimmed-milk with *tal gud* and a teaspoonful of red palm oil to each child. In a few weeks no case of *kerato malacia* was left in the village. Gandhiji also put at Dr Batra's disposal three or four simple drugs with which to treat ailing people from the village who came to him. The rest was for the good doctor to improvise from his resourceful mind. Out of this grew what is today known as Kasturba Hospital, Sevagram.

In answer to a ministerial objection that, if the Mahatma insisted on prohibition being enforced, the loss of revenue resulting from it would starve education, Gandhiji presented his scheme of Basic Education which, he showed, would be self-financing if properly worked. In fact, he regarded the ability to pay its way as the test of efficiency in conducting the experiment. In course of time a number of institutions for the implementation of Gandhiji's constructive programme, like the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Khadi Gramodyogalaya and Basic Teachers' Training Centre, grew up around the nucleus of the Ashram. It became the venue of meetings of the Congress Working Committee. Congress ministers came here from various provinces for consultation with Gandhiji. It gave them first-hand experience of village life, its discomforts and handicaps, which they would

not otherwise have got. There was no *pucca* road connecting Sevagram with Wardha, but only a dirt track where people often lost their way. Gandhiji himself, while returning in a car from Wardha, once lost the track. On seeing the headlights of his stranded car in the far distance, Mira Behn and I had to rush forth with lanterns to indicate the way. On another occasion, during the monsoon several Bombay ministers arrived in the Ashram minus their shoes, which had got stuck in calf-deep mud. One of them had slipped and floundered in the mud. He had actually to wrap himself in Mira Behn's saree while his muddy trousers were cleaned and dried.

In March 1946 Gandhiji went to Uruli Kanchan to launch his nature-cure experiment. When there, he was summoned in April to Delhi by the Cabinet Mission. He never returned to Sevagram after that, except for one brief visit for a week or so in August that year. He had planned to go to Sevagram on 3 February 1948 for a fortnight. But on January 30 he was assassinated.

What was the significance of the Sevagram experiment? In the first place, it was an experiment in running a miniature state based on no sanction save the moral. A cantankerous fellow from the village trespassed on the Ashram land and forcibly took away a tree that had been felled to provide fuel. Gandhiji assembled the village-folk and told them that he had come only to serve them. He had no axe to grind. He wished to stay there only on their sufferance. If they did not like his presence or that of his co-workers they would all go away. But if they wished them to stay in their midst they should be able to keep the unruly among them under restraint. Before long, the offender came and apologized and restored what he had forcibly taken.

After Congress Ministries were formed, a number of Harijans came with black flags to demonstrate and threatened to stage a hunger strike on the Ashram grounds, unless certain political demands of theirs were conceded by the Central Provinces Ministry. Gandhiji told them that their demands were unreasonable and, in any case, he could do nothing in the matter. Finding them determined, he told them that they could please themselves and that he would provide them every facility to do so. Water was to be provided to them every two hours and, when one of them fell ill, he sent my sister, Sushila, to treat him.

He finally told them that, instead of sitting in the sun, why did they not select any place in the Ashram they liked and move into it, so that they could conduct their hunger strike with as little discomfort as possible? He would get the chosen part of the Ashram vacated for their use. They chose Kasturba's room. She vacated the room for them and they occupied it. Ultimately they realized the futility and perhaps the folly of what they were doing, gave up the hunger strike and went back.

The Sevagram experiment revealed, as nothing else could have, a new technique for all-round transformation of the village community. The close association with Ashram life and all the activities of the Ashram imperceptibly built into the village-folk a new set of cultural and spiritual values. The village temple of the *savarnas* was thrown open to Harijans and the *savarnas* of the village spontaneously began to attend ceremonials and *kirtans* in the Harijan temple. They also very largely shed the prejudice against eating food handled by the Harijans. Sevagram was once like many other villages where villagers lived on the verge of despair, without a gleam of hope in their eyes. Thanks to the resuscitation of the spinning-wheel and the handloom, the introduction of other village crafts—*tal gud*, the bakery, and dairying, coupled with Basic Education—the village began to wear a new look. The people wore better clothes, their food habits improved, their milk supply increased, and they began to avail themselves of the help provided by the medical and maternity centre set up in the Ashram. Finally, when the 'Quit India' struggle came, they took their full share in it, setting an example in non-violent courage and sacrifice which sophisticated city-bred folk might well envy. And all this without a word of political doctrine being breathed into their ear!

As a means of mass-awakening and organization for a non-violent struggle, the Sevagram experiment has a deep significance for all dispossessed and underdeveloped people struggling for their rights.

Gandhiji's Ideal of a Private Secretary

The term 'Private Secretary' in connection with Gandhiji is somewhat of a misnomer, as he had nothing private nor 'secret' from which the word 'Secretary' is derived. Private secretaryship under him was, in a sense, *sui generis*. In popular imagination 'Private Secretary', especially in its political association, carries with it a glamour, a suggestion of prestige and influence. Permanent secretaries of departments, for instance, are known to wield power which makes them a force to reckon with, while secretaryship to powerful political chiefs is often coveted as a stepping stone to a public career and office, maybe a succession to the chief himself. In the case of Gandhiji, however, all this was reversed. His ideal secretary could have no interest save how best to serve his master's ideals. He had to turn his back on name and fame and all those glittering prizes of life which the average man covets. He had to efface himself completely, merge himself in the master without, however, losing his personality. He had to become his master's *alter ego*—autonomous but in perfect unison with him. This was the central requirement; all others flowed from it as corollaries.

During the second Round Table Conference in London, a young secretary in the India Office who had become very close to us, once assured us in a confiding mood of his good offices with an influential minister whenever necessary. 'You know the influence private secretaries wield', he added with a wink. We told him that we were an exception, we were only *hamals* (porters or coolies). 'I am another', he quickly rejoined, and we all had a hearty laugh.

Gandhiji variously described himself as a scavenger, spinner, weaver or an agriculturist at different times. His secretary had therefore to be an understudy in all these trades. Gandhiji claimed to be only the first servant of the nation. He expected his secretary to consider himself to be the servant of the lowest.

Mere intellectual brilliance counted for very little in his eyes, but passion for truth, rectitude and a sincere striving for the ideals for which he stood meant everything to him. Work of any kind under him was a discipline and an apprenticeship in life. Secretaryship was no exception. His secretary had to be ready to perform the meanest task that might come his way, with as much willingness, diligence, concentration and care as for the highest. The tasks ranged from manual to intellectual work, as, for instance, from cooking, washing clothes, cleaning latrines or tending the sick, to running a big daily newspaper, answering awkward questions from none too friendly and persistent correspondents, reproducing from memory notes of an important conversation or interview, or negotiating an interview with the Viceroy or his officials. Mahadev Desai acquitted himself equally creditably in each and all of them. But it was in the manual tasks that his apprenticeship with Gandhiji really began, and Gandhiji often remarked in later years that his brilliant success in intellectual fields was due to his schooling in the former.

The first thing that a secretary of Gandhiji had to learn was the importance of being punctilious and exact in small things. Nothing must be done in a slipshod or slovenly manner, be it ever so insignificant. Even in a hastily scribbled note, all the t's must be crossed and i's dotted. To post even an ordinary postcard without revision he regarded as inexcusable. To try to excuse yourself on the score of pressure of work or lack of time was only to accuse yourself, and heaven help the unfortunate who landed himself in that unenviable position. He insisted on thoroughness and precision in everything. Even a short reply to a casual correspondent must show a close study and grasp of the matter dealt with. Gandhiji's secretary was not to await instructions, he had to be able to anticipate them. In other words, he had to be able to think and act independently of his master and, in a measure, to replace him.

Mahadev Desai was the ideal secretary in Gandhiji's conception. Gandhiji once described him as a son, secretary and lover rolled into one. On another occasion he described the latter's relationship with him as that of a 'Hindu wife'—'mutually complementary and indissoluble'; it was a 'marriage of two souls'.

After his university career and varied experiences, first as a

clerk in the Oriental Translator's office, where he was much in demand as a friend in need not only by his colleagues but his superiors also; then as a lawyer and as an Inspector of Co-operative Societies, followed by a short spell of private secretaryship to a well-known Bombay Home-Rule Leaguer, he came to Gandhiji in 1917 at Kochrab and immediately realized that he had found the master he was in search of. His first experience was as a copyist and amanuensis. He not only won Gandhiji's admiration by producing faultless copies in his elegant, print-like hand at incredible speed, but also for his intelligence and critical faculties in his work, suggesting alterations and improvements in the text wherever necessary. When, some time later, he held back from publication, on his own initiative, an article that Gandhiji had sent, as it seemed to contain an argument of doubtful validity, it was Gandhiji who felt he had found his ideal secretary.

In those early days, before the Mahatmic handicap forced upon Gandhiji the irony of travelling in third class reserved bogies, he used to travel in the ordinary third-class all by himself. After joining him, Mahadev accompanied him on these journeys and acted as his *hamal*. He looked after Gandhiji's travelling kit, made his bed, cooked his food, washed his thick heavy khadi clothes and cleaned his commode, besides rendering secretarial assistance.

After the successful Champaran Satyagraha campaign, Mahadev settled down with Gandhiji in Motihari where, with his wife and other co-workers, he taught the three R's to the village children. It was also during this period that he had his real schooling in those values and norms that have come to be associated with Gandhiji's name, e.g., simplicity coupled with elegance, meticulous regard for neatness and cleanliness, a capacity for concentration in the midst of turmoil and chaos, preference for manual skill over mechanical perfection and a passionate love of the mother tongue. 'He would insist on my writing the most important dispatches on the crudest hand-made paper and that too with a reed pen!' Mahadev once told me. 'He was proud of my handwriting, said it was good enough for any Viceroy, no matter how and on what paper I wrote. Once he even snatched away the steel pen from my hand and flung it out of the railway carriage window.' In the use of

Gujarati the disciple soon learnt to excel the master and in later years claimed for himself the role of Gandhiji's instructor in Gujarati, a claim which Gandhiji has since often admitted.

Right through the War Conference days (1918) and the Anti-Rowlatt Bills agitation, Mahadev followed Gandhiji like a shadow, quietly watching, assimilating, rehearsing. In 1921, Pandit Motilal Nehru asked Gandhiji to send someone, preferably Mahadev Desai, to take charge of the *Independent* after George Joseph, whose arrest was expected. It was a great wrench for Mahadev to be away from Gandhiji. 'Why can't you send P. L. Sondhi?' he pleaded. 'Don't you see, I can't deprive Lalaji [Lala Lajpat Rai] of P. L.'s services? He is his right-hand man', replied Gandhiji. 'And I?' protested Mahadev. 'You I want to cultivate as my brains', rejoined Gandhiji, and worthily did Mahadev fulfil that expectation.

He went to Allahabad as desired by Motilalji. As co-editor of the *Independent* with George Joseph, and later, on the latter's arrest, as the sole editor of that daily, he won warm encomiums from the fastidious and exacting Pandit Motilal Nehru. This he did by his personal charm and highly specialized knowledge of Gandhiji and his non-co-operation technique, no less than by his trenchant and versatile pen. When security was demanded of that paper he closed it, and under Gandhiji's instructions brought it out in manuscript form. Some of his colleagues on the staff, new to Gandhiji's ways, could not appreciate the new venture and felt it was *infra-dig* to co-operate in it. I happened to be in Allahabad at that time, having been sent by Gandhiji to keep the flag flying in the event of Mahadev's arrest, which was considered imminent. Undaunted by the non-cooperation of his colleagues, Mahadev told them that he had not served his apprenticeship under Gandhiji for nothing, and would bring out the paper unassisted, if it came to that. And brought out it was, that very evening, the first copy being all in Mahadev's own beautiful hand. I think it fetched a fancy price of Rs 250.

After the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, Mahadev was sent by Gandhiji to assist Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the collection and marshalling of evidence before the Broomfield Inquiry Committee. Such was the impression he created by his ability and integrity that before the end of the inquiry both Judge Broomfield and Reginald Maxwell claimed him as a 'friend'. That each

expressed his 'friendship' in his own typical way, the one by writing him 'love letters' and the other by issuing orders for his rigorous isolation, almost amounting to solitary confinement in Belgaum prison, is a different story.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the varied assignments, some of them of a highly confidential and even astonishingly unusual nature (alas! they cannot be divulged), which Mahadev carried out for Gandhiji with a D' Artagnan-like unfailing fidelity and success. Throughout his career I do not remember a single occasion when he failed Gandhiji in an emergency or left him in the lurch.

In Gandhiji's 'family' of workers Mahadev was the cementing bond, the shock absorber, the activizer. He smoothed differences, soothed frayed tempers, solved personal problems, resolved doubts, pulled people out of trouble when they landed themselves in it and negotiated delicate points with Gandhiji with his extraordinary tact and 'masterly manner', for which he had become famous. He was extremely popular owing to his overflowing kindness, goodness of heart, broad sympathy, understanding and his willingness and capacity to serve, and he lent a helping hand whenever there was a chance to all and sundry.

Gandhiji could give only limited time to his visitors who came for consultation. He could speak to them in *sutras* only. But Mahadev made up for Gandhiji's 'Be quick, be brief, be gone' motto that hung on the wall of his hut above his head, and the visitors as a rule did not feel satisfied unless they could round off their interview with Gandhiji with a good heart-to-heart talk with his secretary. It was also his unpleasant duty to keep out undesirable visitors. And what a motley crowd he had sometimes to deal with, ranging from dyspeptics and food faddists to dilettantes, *litterateurs*, blue stockings, tourists, pressmen and politicians, seekers after metaphysical knowledge, sometimes even lunatics! All this required Job's patience. No wonder sometimes when a particularly sticky customer claimed him, even his suavity could not keep down a persecuted and martyred look on his face. Friends discreetly avoided his gaze on such occasions lest they should betray a smile on the wrong side of their face! But he was happy in the knowledge that it meant saving the precious hours of his master for the service of the country and humanity.

To me Mahadev was more than a colleague—he was like a brother, as indeed he was to so many who had identified themselves with Gandhiji and his cause. Loyalty to Gandhiji was the tap-root from which sprang and to which he made subservient all his loyalties, including his loyalty to his wife, his only son—on whom he doted—his family and, of course, his friends.

Gandhiji, too, was an expert fisherman—not of fish, but of men—with this difference, however, that he never went after the fish with a net, the fish came to him and stayed of their own accord. The net if any was invisible. One of the biggest—if not the biggest—fish in that invisible net was Mahadev. He brought other fry to it in shoals, and his affable personality, winsome manners, never-failing sympathy and sweetness—not to mention his intellectual radiance—helped to keep them there.

It was in 1920 that I first came into contact with Mahadev. I had just gone to Sabarmati Ashram, after non-co-operating, from college. I was introduced to him by a common friend. In a few words I told him what my heart's desire was, viz., to be of some use to Gandhiji as part of his entourage. It did not take him two winks to answer: 'Certainly. We are full up just now and tonight we set out on our tour. But next time. . . . Who knows you may even be of greater use to him than myself.' It was so characteristic of him—he always put the interest of the master first, himself last. The memory of that spontaneous affability has been with me ever since.

Mahadev's enthusiasm, however, sometimes proved a bit premature and short-lived. Such was his eagerness to collect gold nuggets for the cause that he sometimes fell victim to the 'will to believe' and allowed himself to go into ecstasies over what afterwards proved to be not quite gold. Once he met a gentleman and seriously told us that he had struck upon a veritable gold reef! His new find however proved to be a very sticky customer and stuck to him like a wet stamp, driving him almost to desperation in the midst of his heavy preoccupations. The next day, when one of us passed by them sitting together, Mahadev was overheard saying to his new friend wearily: 'Now, don't talk rot!' Afterwards, whenever he reported a new 'discovery' of his, we were on the look-out for what came to be known amongst us as the 'D.T.R.' (don't talk rot) stage! The term even got into Gandhiji's vocabulary. Years afterwards,

Gandhiji, once surprised us by asking with loud laughter if what one of us had reported represented a D.T.R. phenomenon!

Once Mahadev told a lie. It must be admitted it was not a black lie, nor even a grey one, but the whitest of white lies. The circumstances were as follows: during his days of nonage, when he used to be butler, shoeblack, cook, coolie, son and scribe—all rolled into one to Gandhiji—he cooked *khichri* for the Master in Delhi and served it with red tomatoes. The Master relished the dish as seldom before and asked Mahadev to serve it every day. There was only one hitch—the high cost of tomatoes (eight annas a seer) during that season. Gandhiji had the embarrassing habit of inquiring about the price of every item served to him. He might at any time turn round in the middle of a weighty discussion or at the end of the day, as Mahadev bent over his tired limbs to give him a shampoo, and ask: 'Mahadev, what did the tomatoes you served me today cost?' The trouncing he might get would not matter much, but Bapu could order the tomatoes off his menu—his only table luxury—if he discovered they were costing the exchequer of *Daridranarayanna* that much. Not many days after, lo and behold, he found himself confronted by the dread query! Without turning a hair the cook-disciple replied: 'Bapu, only four annas a seer', taking advantage of the fact that in Gujarat a seer means a pound. And so the Mahatma's menu was saved. Years afterwards, I think it was in 1940, he told Gandhiji how he had equivocated to him twenty-two years earlier and Gandhiji had a hearty laugh over it—the only occasion I know of when he laughed over an untruth!

In the intervals between Satyagraha campaigns there was of course the killing daily grind of office routine, which sometimes made Mahadev complain of what he humorously used to call 'this dog's life'. His versatility was equal to his industry. He was equally at home in taking on visitors who came to discuss high politics with Gandhiji as in settling intricate 'domestics' of the Ashram. He kept accounts, drew up tour programmes for Gandhiji with the help of railway maps and the Bradshaw, kept dates for him, answered letters, looked after guests, trudged from Maganwadi to Sevagram Ashram and back—a distance of over five miles either way—in the hot sun, day after day and week after week to take instructions, besides writing for *Harijan* with clock-work regularity. This last was a marvel, considering

that his work had often to be done in the caravanserai that his office was, or in overcrowded third-class railway compartments with undisciplined, shouting crowds besieging the carriage windows at every station. The wonder of it was that in the midst of it all he was able to do the encyclopaedic reading, hard thinking and research which went into his writings.

Assisting in correspondence or other desk work, as I have already remarked, occupied a very small space in Gandhiji's conception of secretarial work. His secretary had to be able to interpret him and propagate his ideals and this demanded that he should have realized those ideals in his own person. Take, for instance, the multitude of activities which Gandhiji was conducting, e.g., Khadi, Village Industries, Harijan service, Basic Education, cow service and, last but not least, the Ashram. In order to be of real help to Gandhiji, his secretary had not only to have a theoretical knowledge of all these but in a measure to identify himself with all in practice. Thus, Mahadev had a passion for spinning, particularly spinning on *takli* and the stamp of his interest in spinning could be seen in his writings in *Young India* and *Harijan*. Those who saw him issue forth at the head of the bucket-and-broom brigade from Maganwadi in the cause of village sanitation, day after day and week after week, in the midst of heavy pressure of other work, could understand his passionate advocacy of the cause of Harijans and village uplift in Gandhiji's weeklies. Not only did it enable him to present Gandhiji's ideas on these subjects with force and conviction through his writings, but his personal example fired workers with a passion for these branches of Gandhiji's activities.

Gandhiji was a very exacting taskmaster. 'Therein fail not' was his motto. Whenever he assigned a task to you, difficulties in the way were never accepted as an excuse for failing to perform it. You had to foresee and be prepared for all emergencies. Thus, Mahadev often carried candles with him during railway journeys to enable him to work at night in case there were no lights in the compartment, as was occasionally the case in those early days in Bihar, or if the lights in the railway carriages failed. Once he actually had to do the writing for *Young India* by getting into the lavatory of Gandhiji's second-class compartment. Lights in Gandhiji's compartment had to be put out at bed-time to enable him to sleep and the balance of the matter for the

press had to be made ready and posted by a particular time. When Gandhiji visited the lavatory in the middle of the night he was surprised to find the two of us already in possession—our papers spread out on the floor. We got a scolding for keeping awake so late, but the writing was finished and posted at the right station so as to reach Ahmedabad in time for the next weekly issue of *Young India*. During the twenty-three years that he was associated with Gandhiji in conducting his weeklies (and this included visits to Burma, Ceylon, and England), I do not remember a single occasion when the publication of any of them was held up or delayed owing to the late arrival of matter.

Let no one, however, imagine that Mahadev was merely a 'faithful echo' of the master. When occasion demanded he could also speak up, since Gandhiji expected his secretary, and in fact anyone who was close to him, to be his conscience-keeper too. He was often prized as a tower of strength by those who brought to Gandhiji a different viewpoint from his own, and he was able on one occasion to avert a fast unto death by Gandhiji when everyone else had failed. It is the only instance of its kind in Gandhiji's life to my knowledge.

On occasions, but very rare occasions, there were brushes, but these were soon forgotten. Once Mahadev likened his association with Gandhiji to sitting on top of a volcano which might erupt any moment. At Delang the 'quarrel' even found its way into the weekly letter when, in a moment of desperation, the devoted secretary exclaimed with Dr Halliday Sutherland that 'to live with saints in heaven' was 'bliss and a glory', but 'to live with a saint on earth' was 'a very different story'. The article itself was of a piece with the quotation. With characteristic coolness, Gandhiji blue-pencilled unbalanced portions of the truant disciple's outpourings to 'save him against himself', suitably corrected the rest and published the whole in *Harijan*! On another occasion, exasperated by the heavy demands made by the rules (the particular rule in question was soon after rescinded) of Ashram life, he tendered his resignation. Gandhiji tore it up, saying that it did not bear evidence of 'coherent thinking' and therefore could not be accepted as an indication of 'Mahadev's real mind'. The ending was equally characteristic. Before many hours, the 'blues' had completely worn off and the

ardent secretary was explaining to the appreciative master the beauties of a gorgeous sunset.

Mahadev was not merely an interpreter of Gandhiji's ideas, he brought scores of enthusiastic, idealistic workers to Gandhiji's fold by dint of his magnetic personality. Wherever and under whatever circumstances he was, that place became a citadel of the master. And who could go forth on a 'goodwill mission' on behalf of Gandhiji better than Mahadev? The late Deshabandhu C. R. Das, doted on him, his sister having constituted herself into his adoptive mother. Dr M. R. Jayakar could not do less than respond to his appeal by raising his subscription to the Tilak Swaraj Fund from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000, whilst the Rt Hon Srinivasa Sastri welcomed his visits as a 'spiritual exercise'.

By nature Mahadev was of the contemplative, scholarly type. Action was not his *forte*. Taking orders, rather than issuing them was his chief delight. 'I am more accustomed to stand behind a chair than in front of one', he once wittily remarked when called by the chairman to stand beside him and address a public meeting. But when occasion demanded, he plunged into the fray with the same whole-heartedness and sense of devotion that characterized him in other fields. A typical illustration of this was afforded in 1930 at the Dandi March, when, in the absence of Sardar Patel who had already been arrested at Ras, he set the whole of Gujarat from one end to the other ablaze with Satyagrahas.

As Mahadev progressed from apprenticeship to maturity, he showed more and more initiative and capacity in handling important missions all by himself. But to the last he remained like Arjuna, with all his marvellous bowmanship, essentially a virtuoso, a faithful instrument in the hands of the Master, the inspirer.

At the time of Bapu's Rajkot fast in 1939 Mahadev was at New Delhi undergoing treatment for an illness from which he really never recovered. But as soon as he got the news, he left his sick-bed and, without a moment's thought, set to work contacting the highest officials, including Lord Linlithgow. It was his faithful and able presentation of Gandhiji's viewpoint before those concerned that contributed not a little to the settlement in favour of Gandhiji and the Sardar. After the Gwyer Award, he accompanied Gandhiji to Rajkot, where even Durbar Virawala

found it impossible to resist Mahadev's charm after the glowing account he got of him from the cynical, hard-boiled Sir Bertrand Glancy, whom Mahadev had met at New Delhi as the head of the Political Department of the Government of India.

Mahadev's duties were such as to involve him in an almost perpetual joust on the Master's behalf. But there were occasions, very few indeed, when he felt called upon to break a lance in the Master's cause with the Master himself! One such occasion came in 1940. Gandhiji had launched individual civil disobedience on behalf of the Congress on the issues of non-participation in the War and freedom of speech. His plan was to send all his best men to prison but not to court arrest himself as it would embarrass the authorities. *Harijan* had suspended publication soon after the Satyagraha of Vinoba Bhave, when a notice was served upon the editor 'not to publish accounts of incidents leading up to Satyagraha by Vinoba Bhave or any report of his speeches, etc.', without reference to the Chief Press Adviser, Delhi.

One day Gandhiji woke me up in the middle of the night and told me that I was the next to offer civil disobedience. I was delighted. But my delight was turned into dismay when he added that Mahadev was to follow me. I tried to expostulate with him but in vain. Before going forth for civil disobedience, I got Mahadev to make a solemn promise that he would not leave Gandhiji's side, even if he had to offer Satyagraha against him. That was the view of all our other friends too. The rest of the story is told in two letters exchanged between the Master and the disciple. They are reproduced below in abridged form:

Most revered Bapuji,

As a rule I wake up at 2 a.m. these days. But yesterday I could get no sleep after midnight. What you told me the day before yesterday in the course of our discussion has been heavily weighing upon my mind. Your words were: 'If you tell me that you are not going to join the civil disobedience campaign at all, I shall abide by your decision'. For me to say so would be the height of impertinence. Had you told me: 'Mahadev, if you feel that it is your clear duty to keep out of the struggle, I won't send you into it against your will', I would have straightaway replied: 'I do not feel it is my duty to court imprisonment, leaving you. But if you feel that your duty requires you to send me away from you, my own scruple is rendered of no account and I shall welcome your decision with "I offer to Thee what after all is Thine own gift".'

But you have taught us to think independently . . . and encouraged us to strive with you till the last unless we feel convinced. That is why I do not feel inclined to give in even now.

You have argued that you want to rely upon God rather than upon man. That argument would have been valid if you had contented yourself with sending Vinoba and Jawaharlalji to prison and stopped at that—as you had at first thought. But when you modified that plan, the premises on which it was based also went by the board. If you really want to test the principle of sole dependence upon God, you should cease to think in terms of action and rely solely on the ‘power of thought’ for the prosecution of the struggle. My difficulty is this. If I concede that you can be left to carry on the struggle by ruling out all human aid, then I must invest you with the attribute of infallibility. But I have known you as a perpetual seeker after truth—a fallible, erring human being—you yourself have admitted errors of judgement more than once before. I must therefore plead with you not to divest yourself of the help of your few tried associates who are still with you.

You said to me the other day: ‘If *Harijan* had not been suspended I would not have thought of sending you to jail’. Similarly you offered to send me to Devadas (to conduct the *Hindustan Times* for him, after your heart). He declined your offer but if he had consented, I would have gone to Delhi and then there would have been no jail-going for me. If jail-going be an absolute duty, how can the continuance of *Harijan* or its suspension make any difference in that respect? It seems to me that at that time you were thinking in terms of a fight, now you are thinking in terms of self-sacrifice. There is some discrepancy between the two stands.

After setting out how he was being pressed by all his friends to stick to his post with Gandhiji and not leave him alone, he proceeded:

You adduced the parallel of Abraham’s sacrifice (of his son Isaac on the altar of the Lord). It is the acme of your affection for me. After that to address you a long letter like this is really to prove my utter unworthiness of your love or, to use a metaphor, it is like a person going off for his toilet when Lakshmi—the goddess of fortune—comes to crown him with the crown of good luck. In all humility I venture to suggest to you that the beauty and grace of your noble sacrifice in this particular case is likely to be utterly wasted upon the Government, who neither expect nor have the capacity to understand such things. And, in any case, I am no Nachiketa to tell you ‘You have given away your all, why do you not give me away too’.

There is a lot more I could say. But I must not take any more of your time. You will perhaps feel that I am trying to measure you with my own pigmy yardstick. But that would be hardly correct. My feeling in the matter is like that of a Hindu wife who has the fullest faith

in her husband's prowess, but still feels that her own place is by his side.

The master made short work of the disciple's argument but left him in possession of the field. His reply ran:

Courting imprisonment never can be your duty independently. It will be when I feel it is my duty to ask you to go to jail. Since I am anxious to carry your reason with me I have not only left you free but have encouraged you to think independently. If your reason does not support my proposition, it is no use my proceeding with it; it won't bear fruit.

The call of self-sacrifice is not different from that of the struggle. The former is conceived only as a part and parcel of the latter.

To send you or anyone else to prison cannot be a duty in the absolute sense. Duty is always relative to an individual or a situation. Thus, if *Harijan* had continued, or if Devadas had asked for your services and you had gone to Delhi, I would not have suggested to you to court imprisonment. But since neither of those duties is there to hold you back, it becomes my duty and consequently yours to offer you as sacrifice.

You have cited in support of your argument the opinion of others. Take it from me, their concern is rooted in sheer ignorance and delusion.

I am quite capable of committing mistakes. That is why I have said I won't ask you to go to jail if your reason is opposed to it. But so long as I cannot see my error, I must proceed according to my light, especially while I feel that I am being prompted by God. . . . But so far as you are concerned, you must ultimately do as you feel prompted.

And so Mahadev stayed. I do not know if it jeopardized in any way the purity of Gandhiji's conception of his struggle. But it certainly enabled many a civil resister like myself to plunge into the fray with a light and carefree mind.

Thus Mahadev denied himself the luxury of jail-going during the Individual Satyagraha of 1940, because he did not wish to leave Gandhiji short-handed. But, soldier-like, he later set out to collect a fund of Rs 5 lakhs for the Gujarat Flood Relief work in the absence of the Sardar and completed it by working even when he was laid on his back with double pneumonia. Again, he set out to organize peace brigades in Ahmedabad at the time of Hindu-Muslim riots, leaving his wife on what was believed by the doctors to be her death-bed, with the same unfailing devotion to duty as he had shown on a previous occasion, when, with streaming eyes, he finished his writing for *Navajivan* before setting out for his village home on receiving the news of his father's death.

Mahadev had joined Gandhiji in 1917. In 1921 came the Khilafat and Non-co-operation Movements and Gandhiji was sucked into the vortex of the unprecedented storm that swept over the country. That gave Mahadev his chance; he found himself. He began writing his compendia, Boswellian diaries which continued without a break till practically his last day. The last entry, I think, is dated 14 August 1942. On the morning of the 15th he was no more. Wisdom was gleaned and garnered in these tones straight from the Master's lips. So great was his passion for recording that, lacking paper, I have actually seen him taking down or jotting important talks in the margins of newspapers, on the back of currency notes, sometimes even on thumb and finger-nails, to be transferred to the regular notebook at the first opportunity. He constituted himself into a living encyclopaedia of Gandhiji's thoughts and ideas and the final court of appeal where the authenticity of a particular act or utterance ascribed to Gandhiji could be checked and verified. No one dared to misquote or misrepresent Gandhiji during Mahadev's lifetime without the hammer of Mahadev's rejoinder descending upon him with all the weight of the evidence of his contemporary notes.

I have been asked to set down as addenda the experience of Mahadev's successor in office. The truth of the matter is that Mahadev was not a mere occupant of an office, he was an institution. His office began and ended with himself. He left behind him no successor.

Mahadev Bhai—The Journey's End

At the time of Mahadev Bhai's cruel and untimely death in detention, Gandhiji was allowed to receive two condolence messages out of the hundreds that poured in from all over the country. One of these was from Mathuradas Tricumji, an ex-Mayor of Bombay and a nephew of Gandhiji. There was one sentence in his letter which aptly summed up the relationship between Bapu and Mahadev Bhai. He said: 'Lord Buddha had only one disciple and that was Ananda; so is the case of Mahadev with regard to you.' Lord Buddha had thousands upon thousands of disciples. But Ananda towered head and shoulders above the rest. Similarly, Mahadev Bhai's gifts had given him a unique position among all those who have endeavoured to serve Bapu from close quarters. It was not an easy job.

On that fateful morning of 15 August 1942, the day he died, Mahadev Bhai got up earlier than usual. He extracted *mosambi* juice for Bapu's breakfast and prepared tea and toast for the rest of us before we got ready for the day. The toast was so well made that everybody complimented him on his skill. With his usual good humour he joked, 'Now I will be able to get a *khansama*'s job anywhere'. Mrs Sarojini Naidu, who was also in detention with us, retorted: 'What is it that you are not in Bapu's household already—*khansama*, bearer, secretary and what not?'

Mahadev Bhai had intended joining us for the morning prayers, he said, but was too late for them. So he spent the time shaving himself, clipping his moustache and his nails. Mrs Naidu passed by as he sat in front of a full-size mirror (of which there were any number in the Aga Khan Palace, till Bapu had them removed) performing these operations. He was humming to himself the celebrated lines of Kabir:

“कर ले मिगार, चतुर अलबेली
माजन के घर जाना होगा ॥”

'Bedeck thyself, O dapper young woman, get ready for a visit to the home of thy beloved.' She joked: 'What is the matter with Mahadev today? He has suddenly become very particular about his appearance.' No one could have guessed that it was for the last time.

Gandhiji used to go out for a stroll in the garden about 7.30 every morning. On that day Mahadev Bhai also joined us. He said, 'For the first time after coming here, I slept well last night and am feeling very energetic.' He talked of bringing out a collection of instances of non-violence in literature.

Then for no reason he started talking of cases of sudden death. He told us how years ago his father had died suddenly. He had just become reconciled to his son having taken to a life of renunciation and was thinking of coming to stay with him for a few days. Mahadev Bhai had sent him a copy of his book that had just been published. His father had sat in an armchair reading the book, happy in the thought that his son had written it. Suddenly he put his head back and breathed his last. As I heard the story a cold shiver ran down my spine. 'I hope it will not happen to Mahadev Bhai', I said to myself. Then he narrated how Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel used to play bridge every day and enjoyed it. One day his companion held the cards in his hand, put his head back and died. The Sardar never touched cards again.

After the walk we returned to the house. I started Bapu's massage. The Inspector General of Prisons had come and Mahadev Bhai, Kasturba and Mira Behn had gone to Mrs Naidu's room to meet him. From the distance I could hear their laughter. Suddenly there was a lull and then somebody called me. I thought they wanted me to come and meet the I.G.P. As I was getting ready to go, Ba came panting, 'Sushila, come quick, Mahadev is having a fit'. I ran, only to find him lying in bed, looking as white as marble, and having generalized convulsions. I learnt that, as he stood talking, he had suddenly complained of feeling giddy. He was told to lie down and they had called me. I felt his pulse, it was not there. I listened to his heart. There were no heart sounds. 'Call Bapu', I said and asked for some heart stimulant. The I.G.P. got me whatever he could. I pushed in two injections directly into the heart muscle—there was no time even to sterilize the syringe—but to no effect. By this time Bapu

had arrived. He stood by Mahadev Bhai's bed and called out, 'Mahadev, Mahadev.' But for the first time Mahadev failed to respond to his master's call. 'If he only opens his eyes and looks at me once, he won't go', Bapu said in anguish. Mahadev had however decided to go. He never opened his eyes again.

In spite of my medical knowledge, I had vainly hoped that Bapu's presence would achieve what medicine had failed to do. But the age of miracles, if it ever existed, was over. The convulsions and the groans subsided. It was the end. The Civil Surgeon arrived, shook his head and went away. Ba looked at my face. 'How is he? Sushila', she asked in a choked voice. What was I to say? 'No more?' She asked and began sobbing. Bapu came to Ba and consoled her. He himself was stricken with grief, but bravely bore it. 'Let us pray and then bathe the body', he said. So we sat down and recited the eighteenth chapter of the *Gita*, sang '*Vaishnava Jana To*' and then chanted 'Ramadhun'. The room in which Mahadev Bhai had sat in the morning shaving himself was cleared of furniture. The body was carried to Bapu's bathroom and he bathed it. It was painful to see him pour jugs of water with shaking hands. So I went in and helped him. Then he looked round for a moment and said: 'Mahadev has died as a prisoner, he must be cremated as one'. So we wrapped the body in jail sheets and brought it out. Our Jail Superintendent, Ardeshir Kateli, had arranged for a lot of flowers to be picked. Mira Behn set them around the body most artistically. She had prepared some sandalwood paste. Bapu put it on Mahadev Bhai's forehead and sat down by his side. He and I recited the *Gita* in turns while preparations were being made for the cremation. I noticed that Mahadev Bhai's eye on the side on which Bapu was sitting was half open and felt it was symbolic of his deep love and devotion to Bapu: even in death he seemed to be gazing at his Master.

The authorities had brought a lorry with police and Brahmins in it. They wanted to take away the body and cremate it. But Bapu would not have it. 'No father can hand over the body of his son to strangers', he told them. 'Mahadev was more than a son to me; I would like to perform his last rites myself. But if the Government cannot take me outside, I am prepared to hand it over to friends, but I will not hand it over to the jail officials.' The Government is known to hand over the bodies of murderers

to their relatives and friends after hanging them, and to allow some of them to have a public funeral. But it was not prepared to allow such latitude to a rebel, however non-violent. It would not agree to hand over the body to friends and relatives. There was tension in the air, and all of us held our breath. What will Bapu's reaction be? Bapu sat thinking for a moment. Then he said: 'I do not want to make the death of my son a political issue. If the Government will not allow me to go out and cremate the body, nor let me hand it over to friends and relatives, I will have the cremation here in this compound.' It was a novel suggestion. Nobody had ever heard of a cremation taking place in the compound of a house. The I.G.P. went upstairs and sat telephoning the Government of Bombay. The Government of Bombay in their turn had to consult the Government of India. At last the I.G.P. came down. The Government had agreed to the cremation taking place in the compound of the detention camp. We heaved a sigh of relief and Mrs Naidu went downstairs to select the site.

The I.G.P. had asked if Bapu would like to send a message to Mahadev Bhai's family. 'Yes, I would like to send a telegram provided it is sent without mutilation', he replied. Then he dictated a telegram to me. He began with 'Sorry', then he stopped. 'Why should I be sorry to announce such a noble death? No, scratch out "sorry" and write: "Mahadev died suddenly. Gave no indication. Slept well last night. Had breakfast. Walked with me. Sushila, jail doctors did all they could, but God willed otherwise. . . . Mahadev died a yogi's death. Tell Durga, Babla and Sushila, no sorrow allowed . . . cremation taking place [in] front of me. . . . Hope Babla will be brave and prepare himself to fill Mahadev's place worthily." '

The message was delivered to the I.G.P. with a request to dispatch it as an express telegram. We learnt later that it was delivered to the addressee by post after several weeks' delay. At last things were ready for the cremation. Bapu followed the body with a staff in one hand and a pot containing fire in the other. The Brahmins chanted *mantras* and performed some ceremonies. The body was placed on the funeral pyre and Bapu lighted the fire. Soon there was a big blaze. Ba sat at a short distance. Oblivious of everything, with folded hands she kept on repeating, 'Mahadev, my son, may you be happy wherever

you are. Oh! why should Mahadev have gone and not I?' The Superintendent of the camp, the Superintendent of Yeravda prison and the I.G.P. also sat there watching the earthly remains of that beloved personality being consumed by the flames.

At last we returned to the house. It was past 5 o'clock in the evening. Death had struck Mahadev Bhai between eight and nine in the morning. Bapu said: 'Mahadev has lived up to the "Do or Die" *mantra*. This noble sacrifice cannot but hasten the day of India's deliverance.' Mrs Naidu was convinced that it was worry about Bapu's fast that had killed Mahadev Bhai. She said, 'If ever a man laid down his life for another it was Mahadev. Like Jesus Christ he died so that Bapu might live. Now Bapu must give up the idea of ever going on a fast.' There was no further talk of a fast at the moment. Later, things developed in such a way that a fast became inevitable, but when it did come at last, it came in a modified form, so that, though Bapu went almost to death's door, he was able to survive the fast.

The bones and ashes of Mahadev Bhai were collected on the third day and kept downstairs. A platform about seven by three and a half feet in area and about three feet high was erected on the cremation site. A small enclosure of stones was made around it. Bapu visited the *samadhi* morning and evening. Fresh flowers were placed, and in the morning the twelfth chapter of the *Gita* was recited every day. 'Mahadev's whole life was an uninterrupted hymn of *bhakti*,' said Bapu, 'and it is only befitting that we should recite the chapter on *bhakti yoga* at his *samadhi*. From being a disciple, Mahadev has become my teacher. I visit his *samadhi* every day in order to keep the example of his lifelong dedication and service fresh in my mind. Let us all pray to God so that we may be able to follow in his footsteps.'

Bapu went to bed early that night but he could not sleep.

After Bapu had gone to bed I opened a drawer of the dressing table in Mahadev Bhai's or, rather, our common room, which was shared by Mahadev Bhai, Kasturba and myself. In there I found a sheet of paper in which he had made jottings of the events of the previous six days, from 9 August till the night of the 14th. I reproduce them as an illustration of his journal, which he had kept for 25 years.

9.8.42: After the morning prayer I said to Bapu: 'There has been a spate of rumours and telephone messages all to the effect that the arrests will take

place tonight. Shri Arvind Pakvasa has further brought the news that a barbed wire fence has been put round the Aga Khan Palace where the detenus will be taken.' Mecklai even told me, 'You will be going to a lovely place. I myself would love to be there. I will go there to visit you.' Bapu said: 'After my last night's speech they will never arrest me.' But I felt ill at ease. I tried to get news about the Sardar on the telephone. The line was dead. Fear gripped me. I sent Swami Anand to try the telephone from the next bungalow. He quickly returned with the news that the Police Commissioner was coming to make the arrests. The Police Superintendent came and made the arrests. There were warrants for Mirabehn and myself with an offer to take Pyarelal and Ba into voluntary detention with Bapu. A special was waiting at the station. The whole of the Working Committee group and the members of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had already been taken into it.

We were taken down at Chinchwad. The members of the Working Committee were made to get down first. In the course of a conversation with the Maulana and Jawahar a reference came up as to the fast. They recognised it as a final step. Jawahar raised the point as to why secrecy was incompatible with ahimsa. 'You are free to interpret ahimsa in your own way', replied Bapu.

At Chinchwad Station we were taken into a motor car. Others were made to get into a lorry. Sorrow and grief were written large on Bapu's face. It was accentuated by the way in which Mehta was treated. They caught hold of him by his hands and feet and carried him to the lorry where a sergeant pushed him in.

On reaching the palace I began to give Bapu massage: 'After how many long years are you doing it?' Bapu asked. He slept for one and a half hours during *malish* and again at noon. He then began writing the letter to the Viceroy which he showed to me at night. But my eyes were heavy with sleep. At 9.25 he took silence.

10.8.42: Several further corrections were made in that draft. A second letter to Lumley was written about the Sergeant and for newspapers. The letter was drafted once, twice, thrice. All of us suggested that the Mehta incident should not be over-emphasized.

The Civil Surgeon came, Bapu's blood pressure stood at 142/88, weight 104 lbs.

I suggested that Lumley's letter should be posted the next day. It was decided that the other letter should be held over for further consideration.

The goat did Satyagraha. Bapu said it would not be right to take her milk under the circumstances. Mirabehn had some difficulty in persuading him.

11.8.42: While the letter was being revised Ba and Sushila arrived. They brought a lot of news. The whole day we talked of the happenings outside. Lumley's letter was posted in the evening. At night Bapu described his experience with Jones, Dalziel, etc. I had a talk with Col. Shah.

12.8.42: After making several further alterations in the Viceroy's letter,

I gave it to Sushila, to make a fair copy of it. 'If Government gives me 7 years, I shall be able to do a lot', said Bapu. I reminded him of what Satya-murti had said: 'Bapu, your real work will begin after India has got her Independence.'

13.8.42: I jotted down several more suggestions in the copy of the letter to the Viceroy made by Sushila. Bapu read through it again. Two or three sentences were altered for clarification at Mirabehn's suggestion. Bapu asked the meaning of 'teleology' in 'teleological connection between bourgeois democracy, revolution and industrialism'. This led to a lot of discussion on teleology. Finally, Bapu said: 'In other words, it amounts to arguing in a circle.' Then there was a discussion as to whether the preposition 'with' or 'of' should follow 'reak'. He asked Sushila the meaning of 'varicose'. The two letters were addressed to L. and L. (Lord Lumley and Lord Linlithgow). 'It only needs H.E., before the two Ls (HELL)', remarks Mrs. Naidu.

Sushila wrote a prescription for Ba. The Superintendent went out to send it to the chemist. I said to Bapu: 'He is sending the prescription with Ba's name on top. It is like sending out the news that Ba is here and is ill'. Bapu said: 'You should warn the Superintendent and ask him to strike off the names if he wants to.' The Superintendent was very grateful for the suggestion. He struck off the names and sent the prescription to the chemist.

I made a toaster out of stray pieces of wire. Bapu asked: 'What is the Gujarati equivalent of "Necessity is the mother of invention"?' I suggested:

ગરજ એ શોધની જન્મેતા છે.

14.8.42: The letter to the Viceroy was posted. Today we asked for news about Sardar and Pyarelal. The reply was: 'There is no report about Sardar! So he must be presumed to be well. He did not know whether Pyarelal was in Poona or not'.

Below the last entry I wrote down the sad events of the day. Bapu had hardly any sleep that night. He was up at 2.30 on the 16th morning. I too had been lying awake. After a wash he asked me to recite the morning prayers. Then he talked with me for nearly half an hour to prepare me for more shocks and told me to take up such duties of Mahadev as I could. He told me to keep a daily diary. 'May be none of us will go out of this detention camp alive. Let there be a record of how we spent our time here, what we did and what we thought and felt, for our people outside. And be careful not to write any thing which might lead to confiscation or destruction of the diary by the Government,' he said. I brought to him what I had jotted down the previous night below Mahadev Bhai's last entry of 14 August 1942. He was pleased to see that I had anticipated his wishes.

Soon after Mahadev Bhai's death in detention Bapu expressed his grief at the separation by saying: 'He aspired to be my Boswell and yet he always wished to die before me. How could he do both? So he has gone and left me to write his biography instead. What an irony of fate! It is cruel of children to wish for death before their parents. It is selfish.' On another occasion, he remarked, 'I may not be able to convince others, but I do feel that death is never untimely in the real sense of the term. No one dies before he or she has finished his or her work in this world. Mahadev had put forth the work of a century in his fifty years. So he has gone to his well-earned rest.'

SUSHILA NAYAR

Kasturba

Kasturba died on the evening of 22 February 1944 in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp with her head on Bapu's lap. She had been ill for some time. She had chronic bronchitis and emphysema and her heart was beginning to fail under the strain of a persistent cough. On top of it, she had developed bronchopneumonia. Penicillin was the wonder-drug for pneumonia in those days and Devadas Bhai obtained it from the army medical set-up at Poona with great effort, just a few hours before the end. Bapu was averse to our giving her penicillin injections. He asked me, 'Are you sure she will recover with penicillin injections?'

No one can be sure how a patient will react to a medicine. Dr M. D. D. Gilder and I looked at one another. We were not able to give the assurance that he wanted. He told us not to disturb her peace by giving her the injections, and went for a wash before going down for a walk in the garden. As he was coming out of the bathroom, Ba called him. He went and sat on her bed. She sat up, resting her head against his chest. She was restless and after a few minutes she wanted to lie down. Bapu helped her do so. She put her head on his lap. There was perfect peace on her face, and then, taking a few shallow breaths, she passed away. Bapu's eyes filled with tears as he gently put her head on the pillow and got up from her bed.

Kasturba was cremated in the compound of the Detention Camp on 23 February 1944, close to where Mahadev Bhai had been cremated on 15 August 1942. Bapu sat watching the funeral pyre till it was all over and the flames subsided. Someone had suggested that he should go and rest. He replied: 'This is the final parting, the end of 62 years of shared life. Let me stay here till the cremation is over.' That evening, after the prayers, he remarked, 'I cannot imagine life without Ba.' He had been deeply grieved by Mahadev Bhai's untimely death. Ba's death

had moved him in a different way. Not only Bapu, but all the Ashram inmates and even visitors to the Ashram missed her when Bapu was released a few months later. The Ashram was not the same without her.

She had been ill for several months. In fact, she was in poor health when arrested on 9 August 1942 on her way to address the meeting which Gandhiji was to have addressed that evening. I had arrived in Bombay the previous evening. I had just taken my doctorate in medicine and friends like Khurshed Behn Naoroji, the grand-daughter of the Grand Old Man of India (the late Dadabhai Naoroji) and Mridula Behn Sarabhai (daughter of the textile magnate of Ahmedabad, Ambalal Sarabhai) felt that Ba's health was such that she should not go to jail alone. They felt that I, as a doctor, would be the best companion for her. It was therefore announced that, after Kasturba, I would address the meeting. I had never addressed a meeting before that. I do not know what I would have done, if I had had to do it. But we never reached the meeting place. Both of us were arrested as we were proceeding to the site.

We were taken to Arthur Road Jail in Bombay. Kasturba had a little fever. We were very tired and, soon after reaching our cell, we fell asleep. As we had come after 12 noon on the 9th, there was no food for us that day. The following day had been declared a day of prayer and fasting. We thus had a long fast. Kasturba could not have taken the jail food in any case in her frail state of health. She became very weak with diarrhoea, fever and starvation. I was worried. The jail authorities too must have been anxious and decided to send us to Poona to join Bapuji in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp.

We arrived at the Detention Camp at Poona on the 11th morning. Bapu and Mahadev Bhai were going over a draft letter written by Bapu to the Governor of Bombay. They were surprised to see us. I narrated the circumstances of our arrest and told them of Ba's illness. Bapu immediately had a bed made for her in his own room. The Jail Superintendent sent for medicines which I had prescribed for her. But she improved without any medicine. The presence of Bapuji and the resulting removal of emotional tension, along with rest and proper diet, proved more efficacious than any medicine. She was much better by the evening. The diarrhoea and fever had subsided. She started

looking after Bapuji and the rest of us in a day or two, as she had always done.

It was a rare privilege for me to serve Ba. I gave her a daily massage, washed her clothes, served her meals and read out to her from the *Ramayana* or whatever else she desired. She was a loving mother to all of us and we were a happy family. I was also happy in the knowledge that, at last, I, too, was able to take part in the fight for Swaraj, like my brother Pyarelal and my mother who had been in jail more than once. However, the peace and happiness were short lived. Four days later came Mahadev Bhai's sudden death.

The Detention Camp became a desolate place. We were all full of grief and suffered from acute depression. Bapu told us to observe a minute-to-minute programme which he chalked out for each of us. The only way to get over grief was to be busy, he said. He laid out a course of studies for me to improve my knowledge of Sanskrit and English. For Sanskrit I was to read the first and second books of R. G. Bhandarkar and for English I was to study the 'New and Old Testament', Nesfield's *Grammar* and McMordie's *Idioms*. He ordered these books for me. For Kasturba, too, he chalked out a course of studies and started giving lessons to her. He used to read with her a Gujarati book meant for the fourth form, and gave Ba lessons in geography; he also made selections for her from the *Ramayana*. Mrs Sarojini Naidu joked about the 'honeymooning' old couple. It was a wonderful sight to see them studying together, and the loving care that Bapu took of her health.

A few weeks later we started receiving newspapers. Ba would read the Gujarati paper and make comments on the statements made by L. S. Amery and other Government officials. 'Why do they tell lies?' she would ask. It distressed her to read how the Government was distorting what Gandhiji said and how they were using all their might to crush the 'Quit India Movement'. She felt discouraged at times and would ask 'How will Bapuji win against this mighty British Empire?' One day she said to me during the massage, 'God also seems to be against us, otherwise why should Mahadev have died? A Brahmin's death is a bad omen.' Bapu overheard the conversation and remarked, 'Yes, it is a bad omen for the Government. For us Mahadev's death is the purest sacrifice on the altar of freedom.'

Ba was very particular about observing various fasts and festivals. She would take great pains on festival days to have special food prepared and give a feast to the forty or fifty convict prisoners, who were brought to our Detention Camp every morning from Yeravda Prison to look after the garden and keep the place clean. She also fed the dozen police constables and their jamadar who were posted inside the camp to keep watch over us. One of them, a Brahmin boy, used to help us in the kitchen. His posting in our Detention Camp changed his life. He started studying once again after we were released on 6 May 1944, graduated, and came to see me after he had become a freedom fighter with his own experience of jail life.

Ba supervised the preparation of Bapu's food and would sit by his side with a fan in her hand to keep the flies and mosquitoes away at meal times. She would sit with the rest of us also, and see to it that we had our meals on time and that the food was cooked properly.

Mrs Naidu took the major responsibility for the Detention Camp kitchen till she was released in March 1943. She had been arrested on 9 August 1942 along with other members of the Congress Working Committee and, being the only woman member of the Working Committee, she was brought to the Aga Khan Palace along with Bapu and his two companions, Mira Behn and Mahadev Bhai. About a month after Mahadev Bhai's death, my brother, Pyarelalji was brought there to take his place. Both Kasturba and Mrs Naidu were very fond of Pyarelalji and worried about him a great deal because, in the midst of work, he would often forget to eat or sleep. They both mothered him and took good care of him. In 1943, during Bapu's fast, Dr Gilder was also brought to join our camp and stayed on with us after the fast. Mrs Naidu was released on health grounds soon after the end of Bapu's fast. Later, when Ba got very ill in 1943, Manu Gandhi came, and finally, before her death in 1944, Prabhavati and Kanu Gandhi were brought to help us nurse her. Even from her sick bed Ba would inquire into whether each of us had had our meals.

Besides attending to household chores and our studies in jail, Bapu made it a point that all of us should play badminton and tenniquoit, and had a court made for this purpose. Ba would sit in a chair on the verandah and watch the game. At night she played carrom with Mira Behn, Dr Gilder and Ardeshir Kateli, our Jail

Superintendent. If she lost the game her sleep would be disturbed—which was quite a problem. Occasionally, when one of the four was not available for any reason, I was asked to join the game. We had to so plan the contest that Ba would win the last game, or at least get the queen. Getting the queen made her feel better. She considered it equivalent to a draw in the game.

Ba read the *Bhagvad Gita* with me in later days and Manu would read the newspapers to her. She was very particular about spinning every day, until she became too ill to do so. She looked after everybody's needs. For instance, she saw to it that Dr Gilder and Mr Kateli, both Parsis, were given a feast on the Parsi New Year Day.

During Bapu's 21-day fasting in February and March 1943, Ba had only one meal a day, consisting of fruit and milk, so that she shared his ordeal and yet had the strength to look after him. This had been her routine during all of Bapu's fasts. She had a Tulsi plant on the verandah in front of Bapu's room, which she worshipped and paid a daily visit to Mira Behn's little temple of Bal Krishna, which Mira Behn had set up in a corner of her room.

Kasturba and Bapu were thirteen when they were married. Births were not registered in those days and no one knows her exact date of birth. It is believed that she was born in April 1869 and was thus a few months older than Bapu, but she did not like anyone saying so. Gandhiji narrated to us how he tried to assert his authority over her as a young husband and told her that she must take his permission before going out of the house. Kasturba did not see why she had to take his permission to go to the temple or visit her parents. He would get angry and make her miserable, but could not make her do anything which her head and heart did not accept.

Her first child was still-born. The second, a son (Harilal), was a few months' old when Bapu went to London in 1888 to study law. He came back after three years in 1891 and she had her second son, Manilal, in 1892. Bapu went to South Africa in 1893 for a year in connection with a case. There he had first-hand experience of colour prejudice and racial discrimination and showed the local Indians how they could fight for their rights. Thus, when the case which took Bapu to South Africa

was over, the Indians did not want him to leave. He agreed to stay and enrolled himself as an attorney to practise law in Durban, with several Indian firms giving him a retainer. In July 1896, after spending three years in South Africa, Bapu came back to India to take his wife and children with him. He believed in the Western way of life in those days. Kasturba and the boys were made to wear shoes and stockings even though they were uncomfortable in them. They had also to learn to eat with forks and knives and dress in a manner befitting the family of a barrister. Kasturba gave birth to her third son, Ramdas, in 1898 and in 1900 to her fourth and last son, Devadas.

In South Africa Gandhiji's house was a place where his assistants, some of whom were untouchables converted to Christianity, could also live. Kasturba was expected to serve them in every way, including cleaning the room and commode if an unthoughtful guest did not do so himself. She resented this and it angered Gandhiji. On one occasion he told her to leave the house if she could not do these services for the guests cheerfully, but she was able to make him see his unreasonableness with her tears and gentle rebuke, as she had often done as a young girl after their marriage.

Ba had a will of her own, and Gandhiji had always to carry conviction to her before he could make her accept a particular course of action. This led him in later years to the discovery of Satyagraha. He used to say that he had learnt the secret of Satyagraha from Kasturba. He called her his guru in the art and science of satyagraha. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar once said that women make better satyagrahis, because the woman throughout the world had suffered at the hands of man and had pitted her patience against his impatience. Gandhiji realized that the woman never took up arms and therefore had to evolve a weapon out of her own self-suffering to resist oppression. The spirit of sacrifice is natural and spontaneous for the woman. Out of it, she has evolved the technique of Satyagraha, though the name satyagraha was not known till Gandhiji introduced it on our vocabulary.

In 1901 Gandhiji felt that he had done all he could for the Indian community in South Africa and decided to come back to India. The Indian community allowed him to leave, provided he

promised to return if needed, and he made the promise. Expensive gifts were given to him and Kasturba at the farewell functions held in various places. Gandhiji wanted to leave the gifts in South Africa in the service of Indians there, but Kasturba wanted to take the jewellery with her, at least for her daughters-in-law. However, Gandhiji and the two older boys finally persuaded her to give it up. A Trust was set up and it was arranged that the money from the gifts be used for the good of the Indian community.

After his return to India, Gandhiji set up his practice in Bombay and hired a house in Santa Cruz. He soon had a flourishing practice, but a cable from the Indians in South Africa in 1902 called him back. He went, leaving behind his family, his office and house intact, as he hoped to come back before long. But that was not to be. When he saw that it would be several years before he could return to India, he asked his nephew Chhaganlal Gandhi to wind up his office and establishment at Bombay and join him. Kasturba followed with her three younger sons in 1904. Harilal stayed back in India.

Gandhiji underwent a rapid spiritual change after his return to South Africa. He took the vow of *brahmacharya* in 1906 and decided to change his style of living. He bought a piece of land near Phoenix Railway Station, fourteen miles from Durban, the capital of Natal, and there he set up the Phoenix Settlement. It was his first experiment in community living. Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* had made a deep impression on his mind. He took the vow of poverty. He said that the work of a barrister and barber was of equal importance to the community and should be considered equal. Everyone in Phoenix was paid £3 a week and they did all their work with their own hands, from constructing their huts to growing vegetables and fruit, cooking, and cleaning latrines. Kasturba went along with Gandhiji in all these experiments and took to the simple life willingly and cheerfully. Later, in the course of the South African Satyagraha, she led the women Satyagrahis and suffered great hardship in jails in that country. Satyagraha in South Africa came to a successful end with the signing of the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement in 1914. Kasturba came back to India in 1915 with her husband via England, while the rest of the party went direct to India in 1914.

In India, Gandhiji's party first stayed at Santiniketan at

Tagore's invitation. Gandhiji and Kasturba joined them there in 1915. Later, Gandhiji set up his own Ashram, first at Kochrab, then at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, and still later in 1936 at Sevagram in the Wardha district of Vidarbha. Gandhiji attracted workers from different parts of India and even from other countries. They were from diverse backgrounds and at times a motley crowd. Kasturba was the mother figure in all the Ashrams. She looked after everybody's needs and worked very hard. Whatever she could do she insisted on doing herself, and never seemed to tire. She was very fastidious and insisted on everything being done in the neatest possible manner. All those who have had the privilege of helping her in kitchen, know what a hard task-master she was. Everything had to be done in her own way, exactly according to her instructions. She took charge of young women like me when they came to the Ashram and saw to it that all their needs were met and they learnt the Ashram way of life. She looked after the guests and would study their requirements, their likes and dislikes, with minute care. Besides being a mother and a housewife, Kasturba was a true Satyagrahi, took part in the different Satyagraha movements in India and went to jail. She stepped in to fill the gap whenever her husband was arrested. Her speeches and statements were brief and to the point. Her appeal went straight to the heart.

The very first major Satyagraha after Bapu's return to India was in Champaran in Bihar, where Indian indigo cultivators were being brutally exploited by the European planters. Gandhiji was taken to Champaran by Rajkumar Shukla of Champaran. Young men from Bihar responded to Gandhiji's call. He put to work the young lawyers of Bihar like Babu Rajendra Prasad and Brajkishore Babu (father of Prabhavati, wife of Jayaprakash Narayan) to take evidence, hear the stories of indigo cultivators and write down their petitions. As the women of Bihar were mostly in *purdah*, he made use of Kasturba and other semi-literate Ashram women to contact the women in Champaran in their homes. He trained the Ashram women to treat and nurse the sick in village huts and run schools for their children. The village youth put up shacks for the schools. The foundation of what later developed into the constructive programme of the Mahatma was thus laid in Champaran. Mahadev Bhai occasionally jokingly addressed his wife Durgabehn as 'master', which

recalled her working as a teacher in one of the schools in Champaran in those days. Kasturba had a little difficulty initially in accepting the untouchables as Ashram inmates, but she soon got over this, thanks to Bapu's unyielding stand, and adopted an untouchable girl, Lakshmi, as her daughter.

Kasturba loved her children and grandchildren. She doted on her daughters-in-law. In some ways, I feel, she did a better job than Bapu. Like her illustrious husband, she had enlarged her family circle of loving care and concern. I bear witness to having experienced her motherly love and care, and there were many like me who came from very different backgrounds. But she never let her children and grandchildren feel that they had to share her love with others and gave them complete emotional security. For Bapu, life was a *sadhana*, a conscious struggle to live up to his ideals. With Kasturba, the pursuit of her ideal was natural. She did not have to strive for it. There was a spontaneity about her which gave an added charm to her nobility. She was incapable of hiding her weaknesses and shortcomings. She was natural in everything she did and her life of devotion and service seemed an effortless expression of her personality.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has come to be known as Mahatma Gandhi all over the world. India recognized him as the Father of the Nation. Many books have been written on his life and message in India and abroad. From a mediocre student born in a middle class family, Gandhiji rose through the constant pursuit of truth to become the world's most respected statesman, the greatest servant of humanity and protector of human values, a pathfinder for mankind. Kasturba helped him in becoming what he was.

In the culture of India, the consort's name comes first, as in Sita Ram, Radha Krishna, etc. and, therefore, it is but natural that we should think of Ba before Bapu. However, whereas the consorts of Rama and Krishna had no hand in making their husbands incarnations of God, Kasturba played an important role in the evolution of Mohandas into Mahatma Gandhi. From Kasturba's life we see what an average, almost illiterate girl can do to help the evolution of her husband into a godly man, made in the image of his Maker.

Harilal Gandhi

The only time I saw Harilal Gandhi, the eldest son of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba, was in February 1944, when he came to see his mother in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp during her last illness, some four or five days before her death. He had been given permission for one visit only. His two brothers, Ramdas and Devadas, were already in Poona and had been coming to see her every day and spending most of their time with her. Harilal was in a dishevelled condition when he came, but after a wash he looked much better. Bapu came and stood by, watching the three brothers having their meal together. It gave great solace to Kasturba to have her three sons with her, but she was greatly disturbed to learn that Harilal had been allowed only one visit, while Devadas had been coming every day. 'Why this discrimination between brothers?' she asked. 'Is it because Harilal is a poor man?', she kept repeating. She complained about it to Lt-Col M. G. Bhandari, the I.G. of Prisons, when he came to see her and he promised to allow Harilal to come again. When Harilal left that evening he promised to come again the following day, but this did not occur. Ba kept asking for him. It was with great difficulty that he was found after three or four days and was brought to the Aga Khan Palace in a drunken, and, once more, dishevelled state. Seeing him in that condition Kasturba wept and admonished him. He was not present when she passed away on 22 February. It had become the usual pattern with him. He wanted to be a normal human being, but addiction to alcohol got the better of him.

Harilal was not present to light the funeral pyre of his father, too, on 31 January 1948, though Bapu's death had been announced over the radio and through the press all over the country. He was probably not in a position to get to Delhi fast enough. He might have been lying somewhere in a drunken state. He came to his brother Devadas's home in Delhi four or

five days after Gandhiji's death to share the grief and stayed with him for a few days. Then he went away and was not present for the immersion of Bapu's ashes at Allahabad on 12 February.

What had reduced Harilal to this sorry state? He was a fine young man in his early days. He wanted to become a barrister like his father, but Gandhiji had come to believe in a different type of education in which degrees had no place and the three R's were far less important than character-building. Education for life in his parlance meant doing the chores of daily life as they came, with the utmost intelligence, care, devotion and diligence, be it serving the sick and the needy with kindness, or looking after guests with consideration or attending to any other work. He wanted everyone to always put service before self and consider no work too mean or beneath one's dignity. All work had the same importance in terms of human needs, he said. Harilal was unable to accept this idea, although he tried his best to follow his father's bidding in his early days.

Harilal was a few months old on 10 August 1888 when Gandhiji went to England to study. There is no reference to Gandhiji fondling the child before he left India or inquiring about him in his letters afterwards. Perhaps this was because in those days young parents were not expected to show an obvious interest in their children, or perhaps because the parents were too young to be interested in their off-spring. At any rate, this seeming neglect could lead to a child lacking in parental warmth which is so necessary for its normal emotional development. Harilal went to South Africa with his parents in 1896, along with his brother Manilal, and grew up there while Bapu was still a believer in the Western way of life. The two younger boys, Ramdas and Devadas, grew up in a different environment in the Phoenix Settlement. Austerity and simplicity were the way of life at Phoenix. Harilal was first introduced to Western ways by Gandhiji and later asked to give them up and take to simple living. It was not easy for him to comprehend the change and the underlying philosophy.

In South Africa, Gandhiji was greatly exercised about the children's education. He had taken with him his sister's son, Gokuldas, who was about the same age as Harilal. The better schools in that country were for Whites, and Indian children had little chance of being admitted to them. Even if he could

secure his children's admission due to these schools, the medium of instruction in them was not their mother-tongue, and Gandhiji was a firm believer in teaching children in their mother-tongue, especially at the primary education level. He tried to get a tutor for the boys, but it was difficult to find one. The Indians in South Africa were mostly businessmen and not very well educated themselves. Moreover, as businessmen, they were self-employed and were not available for a tutor's job. Their clerks had some education, but were not fit to be tutors. Kasturba was barely literate and could not teach the children. So Gandhiji decided to teach them himself. But he did not really have enough time for this important work. Even so, Harilal was still in unison with his father, for in 1901, when Gandhiji decided to return to India and the Indian community in South Africa presented him expensive farewell gifts, Harilal and Manilal agreed with their father in persuading their mother to give away the gifts.

When Gandhiji returned to India with Kasturba in 1915, his four sons and Gokuldas, his friend Haridas Vora advised him to set up practice at Bombay. Gokuldas and Harilal were teenagers, 13 or 14 years old, and the problem of their education was still facing Gandhiji. His nephew, Chhaganlal Gandhi, was helping him in his office and lived with them. He taught the boys to some extent, and Gandhiji also found a little time to teach them. But as this was not enough, he decided to send them to a good school. He had two choices—Banaras and Gondal. He could not decide whom to send where. So he took out two coins, a silver rupee and a copper paisa, and asked a child to put each coin in a different place. He then asked Gokuldas and Harilal to find the coins. Gokuldas came back with the silver rupee and Harilal with the copper paisa. So Gokuldas was sent to Banaras and Harilal to Gondal. But Gandhiji was not satisfied with the hostel at Gondal and Harilal was soon called back.

However, Gandhiji and his family were not destined to be in India for long. In 1902 Gandhiji left for South Africa once more, leaving his family behind because he hoped to return before long. Later, when it became evident that he would be away for several years, first Chhaganlal and then Kasturba and her three younger sons joined Gandhiji in 1904. Harilal remained behind in India to continue with his education and stayed at

Rajkot with his aunt, Gandhiji's sister and Gokuldas's mother (Gokuldas had died). However, as there was no male member in the aunt's house to provide the necessary nursing for Harilal when he fell ill, Haridas Vora shifted him over to his own home, where he was nursed back to health.

Haridas Vora was a progressive man. He had three daughters and had given them a good education. The second daughter, Gulab, had sat on Gandhiji's lap as a child and he had been very fond of her. He often said that she would make the finest bride for any young man. Haridas Vora took this as consent for her betrothal to Harilal, which took place after Gandhiji had gone back to South Africa. In one of his letters Gandhiji wrote to Chhaganlal to present her with a sari if this had not already been done, so he obviously had no objection to the engagement, even though he was opposed to early marriage.

Harilal was sixteen or seventeen years old by the time he was taken to Haridas Vora's house during his illness. He was conscious of the fact that he was convalescing in his prospective father-in-law's home and wanted to see the girl who had been chosen to be his life partner. He first saw her photograph, then he saw her in person and was very pleased. The young couple met and fell deeply in love. Harilal left Vora's house when he was fully restored to health. Thus, when he and Gulab his betrothed could no longer meet, they started writing to one another.

Gandhiji was unaware of these developments. He repeatedly mentioned in his letters that Harilal should join him in South Africa. Harilal realized that if he went, he would be away for at least five years and he was not sure if Gulab's parents would wait that long for the marriage of their daughter as girls were married early in those days. Haridas Vora and Harilal's uncle thus decided that Harilal and Gulab should be married before Harilal left India. It seems that the marriage was performed without consulting Gandhiji and Kasturba. Gandhiji was strongly opposed to early marriages and was prepared to let the engagement break, if necessary, rather than agree to Harilal being married at eighteen. He was obviously unaware of the emotional attachment between Harilal and Gulab. When his brother asked him for money spent on the wedding, which had been an expensive affair, it greatly upset Gandhiji. He had already paid

back his brother all that was spent on his own education and had decided to devote all his earnings in future for public work after meeting his bare household expenses. The boundaries dividing his family and the community were fast disappearing for Gandhiji.

Harilal left India to join his father and mother three months after his marriage. He borrowed £10 from his uncle and travelled as a deck passenger. On his return to South Africa he found that his father had undergone a great change in many ways. Gandhiji's spiritual growth after his return to South Africa in 1902 had been so fast that it would have been difficult for anyone to keep pace with him. Harilal was still in his teens. He joined Gandhiji in Johannesburg and worked in his office. Gandhiji taught him whenever he found the time and later Gandhiji shifted his family to Phoenix, where Harilal worked in the press and for *Indian Opinion*. At Phoenix, everyone, with one or two exceptions, was paid £3 per week and took part in all the activities according to his or her ability. The work included gardening, cooking and washing, tending to the sick, looking after guests, working in the press and writing for and publishing *Indian Opinion*. Harilal was anxious to have his wife with him. They had been separated soon after their marriage and she was writing pathetic letters about her unhappiness. It was but natural for the young couple to wish to be together. Gandhiji at first said that she should come as soon as she could find suitable company, but later sent Harilal to fetch her. She reached Phoenix in May or June 1907. She was pregnant with her first child and was very well looked after by Kasturba and Gandhiji. Gandhiji had been opposed to their marriage because he thought they were too young, but he was reconciled after the marriage. He had always been very fond of Gulab, whom he treated as a daughter rather than as a daughter-in-law. On 4 September 1907, Gulab's father Haridas Vora came to Phoenix. He had not been well and Gandhiji had invited him to come for a change. He might have also come to take his daughter back to India for the delivery of the child, but Gulab stayed on at Phoenix. Those were happy days for Gulab and Harilal.

The Satyagraha campaign started soon afterwards. Gandhiji was arrested on 27 December 1907. The news was received when a celebration on account of Gulab's first pregnancy was

going on at Phoenix. She gave birth to a baby girl on 10 April 1908, Ramnavami day, and the child was named Rami. Gandhiji inquired about Gulab and the baby in every letter that he wrote from jail. Harilal also decided to join the satyagraha movement. When Harilal left Phoenix to join the struggle in 1908, he was an attractive young man of 20. He entered the Transvaal from Natal without a licence, was arrested on 27 July 1908 and brought before the magistrate the next day. Gandhiji was present in the court and pleaded for the severest possible punishment for him, because he said 'Harilal would break the law again if he is free'. But the magistrate fined him £1 and, in default thereof, seven days' rigorous imprisonment. Harilal chose to go to jail.

After that Harilal broke the laws again and again, crossing the border without a permit and hawked without a licence, for which he was sent to jail several times—the longest term being six months in 1909. Gandhiji was again arrested on 6 October 1908 and sentenced to a fine of £25 or two months' rigorous imprisonment. Harilal made a speech at a public meeting held in that context on 15 October in which he said that he was proud of his father. It was ridiculous to ask for finger impressions as an identification mark from a person who had been practising law in South Africa for fifteen years. The Indians had asked for justice from the Imperial Government, but got none. The principles for which the Empire stood were not applied to the Indians in South Africa. Thus the British Empire was based on falsehood. He added, 'Some White men say that Indians are dangerous for the Empire, others say that this is not true. I say that Satyagraha is always dangerous for falsehood.'

When Kasturba fell seriously ill at Phoenix Gandhiji sent a telegram to Harilal on learning of her illness and asked him to go to Phoenix to nurse her. Gandhiji was released on 12 December 1908 and joined Harilal at Phoenix to look after Kasturba. When she was better, Gandhiji went to Johannesburg for some public work and was stopped at the border. He gave a personal security and proceeded to Johannesburg. But Kasturba's health again deteriorated and Gandhiji had to return to Phoenix. On 25 March 1909 he appeared in court and was sentenced to jail. Harilal had also offered Satyagraha and was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment on 10 February 1909, along

with other Satyagrahis. Father and son were together in the same jail this time, but Gandhiji was released on 24 May 1909, while Harilal and others were still in prison. Gandhiji was unhappy at his release when his son and colleagues remained behind bars. He wrote, 'We must not give way to despondency. The fight has to go on'. When on 21 June 1909 he left for England with a deputation, Harilal was still in jail.

Harilal came to be known as Gandhi Junior in South Africa. His participation in the Satyagraha had greatly pleased Gandhiji. When friends told him that his son should not go about as a hawker, Gandhiji replied that he himself could not go hawking as he was licensed to practise as a lawyer in the Supreme Court. But several of his friends who were eminent businessmen had been doing so and it had made him unhappy and somewhat guilty for not being able to join them. He felt much better now that his son went hawking like an ordinary Satyagrahi.

Having taken the vow of *brahmacharya* in 1906, Gandhiji now asked his son Manilal and others also to do so. Manilal refused. Maganlal took the vow. Gandhiji also introduced certain other disciplines at Phoenix, such as a saltless diet, which many adopted for varying periods in order to please him. Harilal was upset by all this and saw hypocrisy in it. He began to question the utility of such disciplines and of the Phoenix experiment.

Harilal had been very keen to study and become a barrister like his father, but Gandhiji did not agree to this. It was during Gandhiji's 1909 visit to London that one of his friends, Dr Pranjivan Mehta, offered to bear the expenses of educating one of his sons in England. Gandhiji accepted the offer, provided he was allowed to choose the person he thought most suitable and Dr Mehta did not insist on choosing any particular son. 'If I find Manilal to be the most suitable, I shall send him', he told Dr Mehta. He did not mention Harilal, and this must have hurt him. Later, Gandhiji selected Chhaganlal, his nephew, in preference to one of his sons.

Chhaganlal first went to India to join Polak, who had been sent there to keep Indians informed about the situation in South Africa and the progress of the Satyagraha campaign. From India, Chhaganlal sailed to England. He had been asked by Gandhiji to take the vow of poverty before boarding the steamer

for London. He was to promise that he would not use his education to earn money for himself, for he would be getting his subsistence allowance from Phoenix. He was to dedicate his life to practising the principles and ideals of Phoenix and, if it became necessary for him to live in a town, he was to take a house and do his own cooking and other work with his own hands. Chhaganlal went to England, but did not become a barrister as he fell ill and came back within six months. Harilal was deeply upset at having been ignored.

Differences had arisen between father and son soon after Harilal's return to South Africa on the question of his studies. All four sons and Kasturba too resented the denial of adequate educational opportunities for the boys. Gandhiji's friends also advised him against it. But he was convinced that the type of education available in the schools and colleges was no good. He laid for greater emphasis on education for life than on formal education. He was aware of the dissatisfaction of his wife and sons. To the seventeen-year-old Manilal he wrote, 'When people ask you in which class you are studying, you tell them you are in Bapu's class'. Manilal, a teenager, might have been cowed down by such a reply, but the older Harilal was not. His resentment grew stronger.

Chhaganlal was back from England by 20 January 1911. Gandhiji then selected Sohrabji Shahpurji Adjanina to take his place, and Sohrabji left for England on 21 July 1912. Harilal must have protested, for Gandhiji wrote to him, 'You have not been able to appreciate my action. The main reason is that Sohrabji is a Parsi. It is most becoming that a Hindu should encourage a Parsi. If he does become a barrister, his responsibilities will increase. I cannot make any special use of Sohrabji, but I can of Medh. When I do not encourage Medh to become a barrister, how can I encourage you? If I do so, it will go counter to all my principles'. It was too much for Harilal to swallow. His father's earlier objections to the type of higher education available had not been too convincing. He had felt that his father could not have made the impact that he had if he had not been a barrister. But now, when he was choosing others to become barristers in preference to him, it became unbearable. He felt he and his brothers and mother were being used by his father as tools to satisfy his own fads.

Harilal's wife was expecting her second baby by now. Gandhiji said that she should be sent to India with suitable company. Harilal was in jail at that time. He wanted to take his wife to India himself on his release. But Gandhiji said that would mean unnecessary extra expenditure. By the time Harilal was released from prison, on 9 January 1911, Gulab and her daughter had reached India. She gave birth to a son on 10 January 1911. He was named Kantilal.

Harilal continued to take part in all the activities of Phoenix but he was very unhappy. On 6 April 1911, a telephonic message was received from a hospital that an Indian patient had died and that there was no one to take away the body. Harilal made all the arrangements for the last rites of the dead man. On 10 April the Reverend Phillips and the owner of the *Transvaal Leader* were leaving for England. They were both supporters of the Indian cause and Harilal went to see them off. A week later he went to receive the Satyagrahis who were released from prison that day. During this period he was greatly upset mentally and was very unhappy. He had a talk with Joseph Royeppan, and on 8 May 1911 he picked up a few things, including a photograph of his father, and disappeared, leaving a letter for Gandhiji. Gandhiji was greatly perturbed when he learnt that Harilal had left. He and his companions searched for him all over Johannesburg but could not find him.

Harilal had taken a train and reached Delagoa Bay. But he had no money with which to buy his ticket to India. He had changed his name so that he would not be recognized as Gandhiji's son. He approached the British Consul as a poor Indian and asked to be sent back to India. But someone recognized him and informed his father. Kallenback came and took him back to Johannesburg. On 15 May, father and son had a long talk, but as their differences could not be reconciled Gandhiji arranged to send him to India. It was a sad parting. As the train was about to leave Gandhiji said to him, 'If you think your father has done you a wrong, please forgive him'.

Harilal was recognized at Zanzibar and was honoured by the Indians there. While replying to the address of welcome presented to him, he said that the struggle in South Africa had proved that Satyagraha was an unfailing remedy against injustice. If Indians were again betrayed and the resumption of Satyagraha

became necessary, he would come back to join it, wherever he might be.

Harilal wanted to go to the Punjab after returning to India and study at Lahore, but Gandhiji persuaded him to do so in Ahmedabad. He was enrolled as a matriculation student, but failed in the examination. There were too many distractions. Two of his uncles died one after the other and he had to be in attendance in the absence of his parents. He was also worried about his wife and children. After his failure he wanted to join the Commerce College, but Gandhiji discouraged him. Failing twice more in the matriculation examination, he gave up studies and decided to take up a job.

Satyagraha was restarted in South Africa in 1913 and Harilal wanted to go back to join it. But Gokhale discouraged him, even though Gandhiji had urged him to return to South Africa. But while he was getting ready to leave India, Satyagraha in South Africa was suspended. The Government of South Africa had appointed an Inquiry Commission under the pressure of public opinion and, as a result of the acceptance of the findings of the Commission by the Government of South Africa, Satyagraha came to a successful end in 1914, with the signing of the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement. Gandhiji decided to return home and sent his party direct to India, while he and Kasturba came back via London, where he went to meet Gopal Krishna Gokhale, his political guru.

Gandhiji and Kasturba arrived in Bombay on 8 January 1915. Harilal was there to receive them. He went with his father to meet Dadabhai Naoroji on 12 January and accompanied his parents when they went to Gujarat and Kathiawad. On 5 February Gandhiji left Ahmedabad for Bombay. Harilal stayed back at Ahmedabad. Gandhiji settled his accounts with his brothers on 6 February, which included money given to Harilal. There were no further monetary dealings between father and son thereafter. Harilal was with Gandhiji when he went to Poona and Calcutta. There were many talks between the two of them, but their differences persisted. On 13 March 1916 Harilal decided to part company with his father.

During the Non-co-operation Movement Harilal was drawn back to his father, joined the Movement and went to jail. But the deep differences with his father persisted. He had also to

take the responsibility of looking after his family. After the birth of his second son, Rasiklal, he wanted to provide his family a normal home life and a proper education for his children. So he took up a job. Some time later he wrote an open letter to his father, bitterly criticizing him for neglecting his and his brothers' education and pleading with him to still do something for his brothers at least. He criticized what he considered hypocrisy on the part of some of the Ashram inmates, and Gandhiji's readiness to accept as genuine renunciation what was done by them merely to please him. Harilal wanted to give this letter to the press, but was dissuaded from doing so by Naran Das. He printed a 32-page booklet and circulated it to many people. Some of the papers published extracts from it. The letter showed Harilal's capacity to write well and convincingly, but Gandhiji dismissed the letter, saying that it merely showed Harilal's weakness and that Harilal might have gained some peace of mind by getting his grievances off his chest.

On 31 March 1916 Gulab gave birth to their third son, Shanti, and a year later, another daughter, Manu, was born. Harilal had earlier taken a job with Seth Narottam Morarji on Rs 120 a month and set up house in Calcutta. All his children except Rasiklal were with him, but Rasik also joined them later. These were happy days for the family. Harilal looked after his family well and, when Gulab delivered Manu, he attended to the household work and served her with great devotion. Kasturba stayed with them for some time during this period and Gandhiji also went to their home. But trouble came before long. Narottam Seth lost money on account of Harilal's carelessness. He did not prosecute him, but he terminated his services. Harilal tried to set up business on his own and borrowed money, which he could not return. Gandhiji publicly announced that none of his friends should help him with money. Harilal sent his wife and children to Rajkot and lived with a friend in Calcutta for some time. In 1918 Gulab fell victim to an influenza epidemic and in October that year Shanti died. A week later Gulab also passed away, at a time when Harilal was not at Rajkot. He rushed to Rajkot on getting the sad news, as did Kasturba. The loss of his wife was the biggest blow for Harilal. He was heart-broken, and Kasturba took charge of his four children.

Harilal went back to Calcutta after his wife's death. The

restraint of his wife and family gone, he was now a rudderless ship. In his despair he took to wine and women. He failed in one business venture after another, fell out with relatives and friends whose money he could not return, and his health also began to fail. Some Muslim friends, taking advantage of the situation, persuaded him to accept Islam, and he became Abdulla for a little while. It shocked and pained his parents and his children. Ramdas, and later his son Kanti, went to see him and had long talks with him. Kasturba wrote an open letter to him which was published in many newspapers in which she not only took him to task but also appealed to Muslim friends not to make a mockery of religion. The Arya Samaj brought Harilal back to Hinduism, but he remained an irresponsible alcoholic.

Harilal's second son, Rasiklal, who had gone to Delhi with his uncle Devadas, was studying at the Jamia Millia. But he fell ill with typhoid and his condition deteriorated despite the treatment of the renowned physician, Dr Ansari. Harilal reached Rasik's bedside shortly before his death.

Harilal worried about his daughter's marriage, and was pleased when Rami was betrothed to Kunwarji, whom he had met earlier and approved of. Manu was later married to Surendra Mashruwala, a nephew of Kishorelal Mashruwala, a close colleague of Bapu. Kanti married Saraswati, a niece of G. Ramachandran, another close colleague of Gandhiji. Kanti went to Bangalore with his wife and son, Shanti (named after the brother he had lost), to study medicine and Harilal stayed with them for about six months. But the addiction to alcohol reasserted itself and he left them. As mentioned earlier, he came four days after his father's death to Devadas and left his house before the immersion of Bapu's ashes. Harilal died shortly afterwards, in June 1948.

It was a tragic end to a once-promising life. Who was responsible for the sad developments in Harilal's life? What had blasted a promising young man's dreams and aspirations? Whatever might have been Gandhiji's compulsions, it seems he was less than fair to his wife and children. Like Lord Rama, who cared more for what the washerman said about him than for Sita's feelings, Gandhiji cared more for the principles that he considered true, than for the emotional and other needs of his wife and children. Harilal could not accept the changes

demanding by his father and broke down in the struggle to make something out of his own life and career. He was perhaps the ablest of Gandhiji's four sons. Given the chance to prove himself, he might have even matched his father's performance. That his life ended as it did was not only a tragedy but a great national loss.

SUSHILA NAYAR

Manilal Gandhi

Manilal Gandhi, the second son of Mahatma Gandhi, was born on 28 October 1892. He had participated in the satyagraha movement in South Africa as a teenager and, he too, had grown up during a period when Gandhiji's life was undergoing a profound change.

Manilal, who had experienced rigorous Ashram life at Phoenix in South Africa, found life at Sevagram Ashram much softer. While staying at Kochrab and Sabarmati he had taken part in his father's constructive activities as well as in Satyagraha and he was amongst the foremost Satyagrahis in the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. Hundreds of volunteers with fractured skulls and broken bones were removed unconscious from the field on stretchers and among those who were the first to come under lathi blows was Manilal Gandhi.

Gandhiji had been arrested before the police raid. The arrest of Kasturba Gandhi and Abbas Tyabji, the Grand Old Man of Gujarat, who was to have led the raid after Gandhiji, followed soon after. Mrs Sarojini Naidu promptly stepped into the breach and a camp was set up at Dharasana. The following week was marked by a series of tactical manoeuvres and Satyagraha on a small scale, during which Mrs Naidu gave proof of her mettle by squatting on the dusty footway in the warm April sun the whole day with the armed police barring the way. Gandhiji had left no clear-cut plan, for none was possible in the circumstances. Both sides, the Satyagrahis and the authorities, were cautiously feeling their way without being very clear as to what the next step was going to be. A stalemate threatened to set in—a dangerous development on the eve of big action. There were several hundred volunteers in the camp and if demoralization set in, the whole venture might end in an inglorious debacle.

I took Manilal aside and said, 'I wish to talk to you about something.'

‘So do I’, he replied.

‘You see how things are shaping. I do not like the look of them.’

‘I knew you were going to talk about this. I also do not like the present stalemate. Well, then?’

‘We must break it and intensify the fight. There should be a mass raid with a minimum of two thousand volunteers to force the authorities either to imprison us or to open fire upon us, not play cat-and-mouse.’

Manilal’s countenance brightened. It was like a war-horse smelling gun-powder on the eve of battle. ‘I like it. It brings back to my mind the old South African days.’

‘And if the big guns do not listen to us?’

‘Let us in that event tell them that we shall go away either to Sholapur where martial law is in force or join action somewhere else after our heart.’

‘Yes.’

‘A compact then?’

‘Yes.’

We returned to the camp where our absence had already attracted notice. A short council of war was held. In the end, our viewpoint was accepted with some modification. Sardar Patel’s daughter, Manibehn Patel, went forth as a recruiting agent and brought contingents of volunteers from Kheda by the train-load. Two days later the action came. Manilal’s death-defying courage elicited the admiration even of the police officials. He had only recently been married. He was badly beaten up. If he was not carried on a stretcher after the lathi blows, it was due solely to his will-power and sturdy constitution. He was sentenced to a fine and nine month’s rigorous imprisonment, with three months’ additional imprisonment in lieu of non-payment of the fine, and was put in C class, like the vast bulk of the Satyagrahis those days.

This was not his first term for Manilal. He was already a seasoned Satyagrahi when he came to India, having had his initiation under Gandhiji during the South African Satyagraha. He had tested his mettle in South African jails where life was no joke. The first time was in 1910, when he was eighteen, in Johannesburg as part of his father’s civil disobedience campaign. He was given ten days’ imprisonment, broke the law again, was

rearrested, and spent another ten days in prison. In 1913, he crossed the border at Volksrust without a permit and was imprisoned for three months. Again in Durban in 1919, after returning to South Africa from India, he was arrested and put in prison.

During our prison-life together following the Dandi March, I came to know Manilal more closely. Gandhiji used to be a very hard task-master in his South African days and during the early years of his return to India. That was before his iron constitution began to give way under the fiery ordeals through which he had put it. It forced him to be less demanding on his own body and made him very reluctant to enforce discipline on those around him with the same rigour as before. Having grown up under the earlier regime, Manilal found it a bit difficult to reconcile himself to the loosening of discipline, which he saw in Gandhiji's ashrams in India, and nostalgically harked back to the golden age of austerity to which he had had the privilege to belong. 'I once sent some money surreptitiously out of my own savings to my elder brother which Bapu had interdicted and had not the courage to own up when he questioned me about it', he once related to me. 'Bapu darted a piercing glance at me. I could not bear it and confessed with tears asking only for reprieve, viz., that he should not launch on a fast. He relented and told me I must leave the Ashram immediately and go to Madras and learn weaving. With a note of introduction and a little money I arrived in Madras. The place I was put up in was filthy and full of mosquitoes. Soon after, the little money that was with me was stolen . . .' Tears stood in his eyes as he narrated to me the story. 'That was Bapu and that is how he brought us up. It seemed harsh to us then, but I now see what love he bore us. It made us.'

Manilal went back to South Africa after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 and continued to edit *Indian Opinion* and run the Ashram at Phoenix which Gandhiji had founded. Every now and then he gave evidence of his father's touch. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, he stepped into the breach to keep the flag flying, offering civil disobedience by going into the White sections of Durban buses, libraries and rail-road stations. Homer Jack, an American admirer of Gandhiji, who went on a pilgrimage of old sites associated with the Mahatma in South

Africa, has described how once Manilal took his daughter on the lower-level of a double-decker bus, which was prohibited for Indians. The conductor stopped the bus and telephoned headquarters. Back came instructions from the headquarters—Manilal and his daughter were not to be arrested. 'The city of Durban did not want a Gandhí on its hands!'

In May 1946 an Indian deputation from South Africa waited on Gandhiji at Valmiki Mandir in Bhangi Colony at New Delhi to seek his advice on the struggle against the threatened land law and franchise bill, on top of the existing disabilities. The deputation was headed by Sorabjee Rustomjee, son of the late Parsee Rustomjee, who had been with Gandhiji in the South African Satyagraha, and included other veteran Satyagrahis, like Mr Christopher, who had been trained under Gandhiji. Hitherto Gandhiji had been opposed to the Indian community inviting Africans to join them in a united anti-White front. That would be exploiting Africans for the Indians' own ends, he had said. The Africans had a much bigger stake than Indians in South Africa, he said, but they were not yet ready to launch a struggle for it. A great awakening had, however, come over them of late. Gandhiji, therefore, told the deputation that they must now associate with the Zulus and the Bantus and identify themselves with their cause. 'It means that you take them along when you have developed the power of non-violence. . . . One day the Black races will rise like an avenging Attila against their White oppressors unless someone presents to them the weapon of Satyagraha. But if you allow yourselves to be overwhelmed and swept off your feet, it will be their and your ruin.'

The South African Indian community had fallen from grace. It had not been able to retain the moral fibre that Gandhiji had imparted to it when in South Africa. The delegation shared its fears with Gandhiji, who told its members not to lose heart. If they produced one civil resister of merit, he told them, that would pull them through. 'Do not start the struggle . . . unless you have that stuff.' The delegation asked him if a leader could not be sent from India to organize and lead them. Gandhiji replied that a leader would have to rise from among them. He hoped they would throw up one in due time. He mentioned how he had been urging Manilal to train his children for the

task and how in pursuance of that principle Gandhiji had refused to send his own children to public schools like Lovedale and Fort Hare. Manilal and his whole family were there with them in their struggle, he added.

Manilal set about to convert himself into the 'true civil resister' of which his father had spoken and longed to see in Manilal. He put himself under a rigorous discipline of self-denial and prayer. At the 1949 World Pacifist Conference in Santiniketan which he attended as a delegate, he spoke with a voice which had the unmistakable ring of authenticity: 'The mastery of self is the crux of the whole question before us. . . . I am only a humble servant trying to follow in the footsteps of my father. . . . Father suffered in the flesh in order that the light might shine out on the masses. He fasted for others, but we must do penance for ourselves. I would suggest that at Sevagram we undergo seven days' fasting and prayer. Without the grace of God and without humility we can achieve nothing.'

The conference was deeply impressed. Here was a chip of the old block. The gathering showed its deep appreciation and respect by closing with a period of silence. At the Sevagram session of the conference Manilal did not participate in the proceedings but made his contribution by observing a week's fasting and prayer.

When a struggle against further disabilities that were sought to be put upon the Indian community on top of the Pegging Act was about to be started in 1952, many had doubts as to whether it would be strictly on non-violent lines. Manilal was among the doubters. Tom Wardle, who till recently was working with him as a member of the staff of *Indian Opinion*, gave a vivid account in *Peace News* of the inner struggle and what finally led Manilal to burn his boats:

The African National Congress and the Indian National Congress in South Africa have for a considerable time been dominated by the communists. Their whole conception of the Defiance Campaign originally was to foster hatred against the Whites and to use passive resistance as a cloak for preparation for violence. When anti-White solidarity was sufficiently established and the resentment against the Whites had accumulated sufficiently, 'the Communist back-room boys' would organize a general stoppage of work. It was presumed that once non-Europeans could be got to down tools for a week the entire South African economy would be paralysed.

The danger was obvious. Without weekly pay many Blacks would starve and terrible reprisals would follow if there was an outbreak of violence on the part of the passive resisters. Manilal felt that he could not associate himself with a struggle of this type. He insisted that it was not enough merely to exhibit non-violence. It had to be truly felt. 'It is not enough to have no hatred in our hands, we must have no hatred in our hearts also', he said.

At the same time he could not remain inactive. Manilal decided that the most effective contribution he could make to the cause was to purify the atmosphere and avert the danger of violence through the method of penance that his father had taught, and launched on a twenty-one days' fast. The fast attracted considerable attention and succeeded in purifying the atmosphere. It also figured in the United States, where Manilal later went, when the Indian case came up for hearing before the U.N.O.

Non-violence often works in mysterious ways. But for Bapu's spirit, Manilal himself would probably not have been prompted to go in for a self-purificatory and all-purifying fast. It dramatized for all Bapu's spirit, which he strongly felt at work within himself. Manilal's worst fears were belied. The first welcome surprise came from Port Elizabeth. Wrote Wardle:

There Christian African ministers were directing the campaign. It was the practice of groups there to kneel and pray in the streets before going to their act of defiance and then to depart singing hymns.

The very anthem, '*N' Kosi Sikelele Afrika*' which the resisters sang was a spiritual song—'Come Great Spirit over our land—God bless Africa.'

From out of their own history and traditions and experience of life, it seems, they drew the courage and the inspiration for their task. And it seemed also that the Christians among them (South African Blacks) were giving life to an understanding of the Christian message which put their White brethren to shame.

The Communists had intended non-violence to be used only as an expedient in the early stages of the Defiance Campaign till the people had developed the capacity for violence. The mask of non-violence was then to be dropped. But now people were beginning to believe in non-violence. Wardle continued: 'Manilal Gandhi was astonished at the way the campaign was going. It exceeded all his expectations—the discipline, the tenderness of the African resisters, were beyond praise.' Mr Robert Lawrence McKibbin, in a protest against the Government's attempt to stir

up inter-racial strife, wrote to *The Star*, Johannesburg: 'Let's be honest and recognize the remarkable contribution the Indians seem to have made to the Resistance Movement. They have taught Africans the idea of non-violence, passive resistance and self-suffering, but not to injure White people.' He called upon the Government not to incite them to ill-will but to investigate the real causes of the Defiance Struggle and find remedies for settling the trouble in a just and reasonable way.

Manilal said that in a short while he would throw himself into the struggle. But in his heart there was still the nagging doubt and question: 'Are there no White men to prove our point? We say: "Do not hate the White men because they are our brothers; do not harm them because they are not aware of their wrongdoings; by our example we shall win them to our cause." But it rings a bit hollow if there is not one White man to come with us.' The lacuna was filled up when Whites began to come into the struggle.

C. J. Driver, the biographer of Patrick Duncan who was the son of a former Governor-General, writes in his book *Patrick Duncan, South African and Pan-African*:

In 1951-4 he [Duncan] was in fact closer to the Natal Indian Congress than any other organization. He was particularly close to the Mahatma's second son, Manilal Gandhi, who had worked in South Africa and India with his father and who had returned to South Africa to run the settlement, the Ashram, at Phoenix near Durban which his father had founded, and to promote his father's ideas, mainly through his newspaper *Indian Opinion*. Manilal Gandhi had, virtually single-handed, run his own passive resistance campaign in South Africa, sitting on benches marked 'For Europeans Only', using the White section of the Durban library, going into the Free State despite its regulations restricting the presence of Indians, and serving several jail sentences in the process, despite the fact that he was getting old and was often ill. Many people found Manilal a pale shadow of his father; but Duncan, who understood what it was to be the son of a famous father, and admiring the Mahatma above all men, found himself much in sympathy with Manilal. When, in December 1951, Manilal went to the ANC Conference in Bloemfontein called to consider the techniques ANC and its allies would adopt unless the Nationalist government withdrew its most repressive legislation, Duncan had gone quietly (for he was still Judicial Commissioner) to meet him at the railway station at Modderport, to talk passive resistance and *satyagraha*.

On 28 November 1952, the *Star* carried the first public announcement of Duncan's joining the Defiance Campaign; the

Times carried the story next day and the *Observer* the day after. The *Star* reported:

Sir Patrick Duncan's son joins defiance body

In a statement he says: 'We are approaching the greatest crisis in our history; it is no longer in the power of White South Africa to impose on non-White South Africa discriminations based purely on colour. . . . All that is in the power of White South Africa is to choose whether the change will come with or without violence. If White South Africa turns today to naked force to preserve the present caste system it will be held responsible by history for the race war that will probably destroy our country.'

C. J. Driver writes further:

On December 8th, the day set for the defiance . . . after lunch Duncan and Gandhi joined the other defiers outside Germiston location; there were about forty of them—thirty-eight were arrested altogether, twelve Africans, nineteen Indians, seven whites. The entry of Europeans into the campaign was an event of great significance in the South African Defiance Campaign. It considerably minimised the danger of its losing its non-violent character, of developing into an anti-White crusade based on hatred. It transfigured its whole character.

Writes S. B. Mukherji in his book *Indian Minority in South Africa*:

Based on the Gandhian concept of civil disobedience, the movement was fully non-violent. What it wanted was to register as emphatic a protest as possible against the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Pass laws and other legislation against Africans and Indians. African and Indian volunteers took a pledge of non-violence. They invited arrest by breaking the various racial laws. Some would, for example, sit in European waiting rooms at railway stations. Others again would attempt to get into public libraries. The government too hit back—they hit hard and hit with promptitude at that. Ten thousand Africans and Indians were arrested. The movement, it must be admitted, never became a proper mass movement. But it was ably-led and well-organised. The discipline and fortitude of the volunteers surprised the government. The movement reached its climax in September 1952. The arrest of the late Manilal Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi, and Patrick Duncan, son of Sir Patrick Duncan, a former governor-general of South Africa, was one of the striking episodes of the movement. Along with a group of Africans and Indians and seven Europeans—men and women—they offered themselves for arrest on 8 December 1952, by entering without permits an African location at Germiston near Johannesburg. The group sang *Africa*, the anthem of the African National Congress, and patiently awaited arrest. They had not to wait long. All were arrested and produced in court. Manilal was fined £50. He was to serve a prison-sentence of 50 days in default. Duncan was given

a heavier sentence. A European and the son of a former governor-general, had he not committed an unpardonable crime by identifying himself with the dirty kaffirs and the unwanted 'coolies'? He was, therefore, to pay a fine of £100 or to serve a prison-term of 100 days. Duncan chose imprisonment 'in order to make the full sincerity of his motives manifest'.

Manilal too had chosen imprisonment. In the last letter that I had from Manilal Bhai he mentioned how they were trying to organize centres to provide a training in constructive non-violence to Africans in order to stabilize the movement and deepen its foundations. Manilal soon died, however. He died as he lived, in harness, serving the cause to the last. His faith never flagged, nor did his courage ever fail to rise to the occasion. He showed that rare quality of preserving his integrity even at the risk of being misunderstood. There is no loyalty higher than the loyalty to the truth within. Everything else follows if this is there.

On the surviving members of the family and on the Indian community in South Africa rests a sacred responsibility—to walk in Manilal's footsteps, just as he walked in his father's, and to keep the flag flying. The cause they are fighting for has a world-wide significance. There can be no peace in this world so long as the virus of racial superiority is not eradicated. Strength comes and God sends the means somehow where there is sincere striving joined to faith. The lamp of satyagraha must be kept burning in the land of its birth. Let it not be said of them, 'The light shineth in darkness and darkness comprehendeth it not'.

The new spiritual awakening among the Blacks is a portent that needs to be carefully watched. If the leaven spreads, it will be a big landmark in the history of the African races and light may shine forth into the darkness of the world from a continent miscalled 'Dark'.

Ramdas Gandhi

I met Ramdas Gandhi for the first time in 1928 or 1929 when I was a little girl and my brother had taken me to Sabarmati Ashram during the summer holidays. I remember him as a very good-looking young man—fair, with a pleasant smile and light blue-grey, gentle eyes. My brother and Ramdas Gandhi's younger brother, Devadas were great friends. Devadas was not at Sabarmati, but Ramdas Gandhi behaved like an elder brother—very gentle, affectionate and helpful. I was shy and withdrawn in those days and do not think I ever talked with him at the time, though I often met him in his mother's kitchen. Kasturba always served me coffee in her kitchen in Hridaya Kunj, where she had a couple of rooms.

I did not know how to wash my clothes, but insisted on washing them, as all the children in the Ashram were expected to do this. I found it difficult to draw water from the well when the river-water in Sabarmati was muddy and unusable for washing clothes. Kasturba saw to it that someone helped me when I went to the well. Sometimes it was Ramdas Bhai who did so. He was married, but I did not meet his wife during that visit. Kasturba was very fond of him and constantly worried about his health. He was the most delicate of her four sons.

In the winter of 1938 I came to Sevagram with Bapu from Calcutta as a doctor. I had recently graduated and joined a post-graduate course at the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Calcutta. Bapu had been in Calcutta for the All-India Congress Committee meeting and stayed at Sarat Chandra Bose's house. I joined him and my brother there, and went for my classes during the day from Sarat Babu's house. Bapu fell ill with very high blood pressure on the last day, and Dr B. C. Roy, who was attending on him, asked him to cancel his departure for Sevagram. After a few days Dr Roy felt that Bapu could travel; but he asked me to accompany Bapu to Sevagram, check

his blood pressure and send a daily report to Calcutta. I took a month's leave and accompanied Bapu, but his condition at the end of the month was such that I could not come away and my leave could not be extended. So I left my studies and spent two years working in the villages and looking after Bapu's health. During this period I came to know Ramdas Bhai and his family closely. His wife, Nirmala, was studying at Kanya Gurukul in Dehra Dun and their children, especially the youngest, Kanu, were being looked after by Kasturba. Their daughters, Sumitra and Usha, were studying at Nagpur, where Ramdas Bhai had a job; he came to Sevagram on weekends and on other holidays. Nirmala Behn would come with them after she returned from Dehra Dun. Ramdas Bhai was most unassuming and his household at Nagpur had become an extension of the Sevagram Ashram. Gandhiji sent them guests all the time, which became very trying at times, but Nirmala Behn never complained. She always served them with a smile. It was during this period that I began to address Nirmala Behn as Nirmala *Bhabhi* (brother's wife).

Ramdas Bhai tried to live according to ashram principles and was not at all conscious of being a great man's son, nor did his wife or children ever boast of their relationship with Gandhiji. Ramdas Bhai's health was still delicate and Ba and Bapu often worried about it. I have a suspicion that Bapu was conscious of the fact that Ramdas Bhai had to lead a poor man's life because he, as his father, had not given his son opportunities for higher education.

I came away to Delhi in 1940 for my post-graduate studies and, after passing the M.D. examination, went to Bombay on 8 August 1942 and was put in prison along with Kasturba on the following day. After a couple of days in the Arthur Road prison, we were both taken to the Aga Khan Palace detention camp in Pune to join Bapu and his party. Nearly two years of imprisonment in the Aga Khan's Palace gave me the rare opportunity of serving and learning at Ba and Bapu's feet. Ba wrote letters to her family and was most solicitous about Ramdas Bhai, Nirmala *Bhabhi* and their children. When the Government allowed interviews, she wrote that Ramdas and Nirmala should not take the trouble to come to see her. 'He cannot afford the travel expenses', she told me.

Ramdas Bhai did come during Bapu's fast in 1943 and at the time of Ba's final illness in 1944. He was not present when she passed away on 22 February 1944. She had told Devadas Bhai earlier that the responsibility of looking after the family was on his shoulders. 'Ramdas can hardly make two ends meet. Harilal is no good and Manilal is not here. So I am leaving all the cares to you.' Devadas Bhai always tried to abide by her wishes. The marriage of Sumitra, Ramdas Bhai's elder daughter with Dr Kiri (which unfortunately did not work) was performed at Devadas Bhai's home in Delhi and he did his best to look after his brother and his family till the end of his life. But Ramdas Bhai was most reluctant to take help from anyone. He was a proud man with a fine sense of self-respect.

Ramdas Bhai gave his children the opportunities which had been denied to him by his father. Sumitra passed her M.A., Usha her B.A. and Kanu became an engineer and went to the USA for higher studies and decided to stay on in that country. All three are happily married; Sumitra is now Mrs Kulkarni and has two sons—twins—and a daughter; Usha was married to Harish Gokani, who had a small industry and who, unfortunately, passed away in 1983 as a result of a heart attack. She has two sons—one of whom has become a doctor. Kanu married a Gujarati girl from Africa. Her father was a Satyagrahi with Bapu during the Dandi March. She stayed with me in Delhi for a short while before her marriage.

Ramdas Bhai was born in Durban in 1898 and Bapu acted as midwife in his birth. Living in the midst of Europeans, the children picked up English without any effort. Similarly, they picked up Gujarati from their parents. As a barrister, Gandhiji could have got admission for his sons in the European schools, but he did not wish to take advantage of a facility which was not available to other Indian children.

Ramdas Bhai came to India with his parents in October 1901 when he was about four years old and went to the primary school at Rajkot for a while. But Bapu was advised to set up practice at Bombay and the family moved before long. At the end of 1902, Gandhiji had to go back to South Africa in answer to an urgent call from the Indians there; when he saw that his stay in South Africa would be a prolonged one, he sent for

Kasturba and the children and she joined him with Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas in 1904 at Johannesburg. It was a happy period for the family, but it did not last long. Gandhiji was undergoing a rapid spiritual change which transformed his life. In 1905 he shifted the family to the Phoenix Settlement, took a vow of celibacy and poverty and took to simple living in which working with one's own hands was given great importance.

In his reminiscences, Ramdas Bhai has given an account of the type of education he and other children had at Phoenix. It was mainly learning through doing things. Everyone took turns at the various jobs, and so did the children. Their daily timetable is given below and illustrates how work of various kinds was used in education and the development of personality and character.

5.30 a.m.	Out of bed
5.30-7	Daily ablutions, etc. and prayer
7-8	Work in the fields (agriculture)
8-9	Breakfast
10-11	Work in the fields, sanitation work, bringing water from the spring, splitting wood for the kitchen, cobbler's work, work in the printing press
11-1 p.m.	Bath and lunch, cleaning utensils, and then rest
1-4.30	Studies, lessons
4.30-5.30	Agriculture, splitting wood
5.30-6.30	Games: football, cricket, kabaddi
6.30 to 8	Dinner, cleaning utensils and kitchen
8-9	Prayer, reading religious books
9-10	Study
10 p.m.	To bed

Living in a mixed community of Europeans and Indians, of all the major religions and from all parts of India was an education in itself. Ramdas Bhai narrates how the children learnt English by speaking with Europeans, how they learnt manners, and how Bapu made them self-reliant and responsible young people by entrusting various tasks to them. If any of them made a serious mistake, the penalty was taken by Gandhiji upon

himself, generally in the form of fasting. This created a scare and at times led to unforeseen problems. No one wanted to be responsible for Bapu's fast. Ramdas Bhai narrates how he once told a lie out of this fear and got into trouble as the lie was discovered, much to his discomfiture.

The adults conducted classes for the children as and when they found the time. Ramdas Bhai has written of his disappointment at his and his brothers not getting a conventional education. But he adds, 'It has done us no harm'. He also mentions how, after his return to India in 1914, he did try to join the Dakshinamurti school for a while, how Bapu later took classes for him for one hour daily and at least for half an hour when he was very busy, how Bapu entrusted his studies to Vinoba who taught Mathematics and Sanskrit, how he went to jail during the Salt Satyagraha and studied with Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, Nana Bhai Bhatt and Mahadev Bhai Desai in jail. He also mentions his love of music and his efforts to learn to sing bhajans and hymns in South Africa and later in India, how he took lessons in music from Pandit Narayan Khare at Sabarmati and from a music teacher at Bombay for some time. Nirmalabehn says Ramdas had a good voice. Thanks to the family's unsettled life in those days, the repeated satyagrahas and Bapu's fasts, Ramdas's studies could not be continuous and systematic; but he was a well-educated man by all standards.

In 1914, when Gandhiji left South Africa to meet Gokhale in London, the rest of the party came back to India. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore had invited Gandhiji and his family to Santiniketan, and that is where they went on arrival in India. Gandhiji joined them on his return from England. It was an eye-opener for the students and staff at Santiniketan to see the great Gandhi wash his own plate and do all his own work. He and his party did not consider any work beneath their dignity. At a farewell function Gurudev said that in a few weeks Gandhiji and his group had made the students of Santiniketan accept voluntarily what he had been unable to achieve despite years of effort. After Santiniketan, Gandhiji, Kasturba and Ramdas Bhai went to Rangoon to meet Gandhiji's old friend Dr Pranjivan Mehta. On their return, they proceeded to the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar, where they worked as voluntary scavengers and attended to the sanitation facilities at the Mela.

Gandhiji's first ashram at Kochrab, a village near Ahmedabad, soon admitted a Harijan family. This upset his sister Raliatbehn and she had to leave the Ashram. Ramdas Bhai was very attached to his aunt and distressed by this event as well as the unhappiness it caused to Kasturba and other women in the family. But Bapu was adamant and they all made the adjustment before long. Kasturba adopted the Harijan's daughter, Lakshmi, as her own daughter. But the sister stayed away; whenever she fell ill, Ramdas Bhai went to look after her.

The climate of India and the lack of good fruit began to tell upon Ramdas's health. In 1917 Bapu sent him from Kochrab to South Africa along with Manilal Bhai, as Mr West had asked Gandhiji to send someone from India to run Phoenix or close it down, for West had decided to leave. In South Africa once more, Ramdas soon regained his health. But he did not wish to stay on at Phoenix, as he was not prepared to accept its discipline in its entirety and did not wish to be given special concessions. Moreover, he wanted to earn and stand on his own feet. So he left for Johannesburg to take up a job in the shop of a well-known tailor, Dahyabhai Purushottam. He was given board and lodging and £5 a month. His work was to sell woollen cloth, take the measurements of those who wanted to have suits stitched and to get the suits ready for them. He worked in the shop for about nine months.

His next job was with a Muslim wholesale merchant of cotton cloth, M. D. Bharuji, who also took an interest in public life. Ramdas worked here for about six months at £25 a month: his job was to sell cloth to small and large shopkeepers, keep accounts and make recoveries for sales made on credit. He had made arrangements for his stay with an old student of Tolstoy Farm, Bhagabhai Manchhabhai Patel, who helped Gujarati tailors in Johannesburg keep their account books. They shared the rent of the lodging and had their meals in a Surati Hindu hotel.

Next, Ramdas Bhai moved to the firm of a silk merchant of Sind (Hyderabad), Dayaram Gidumal. They paid him £15 a month, besides board and lodging. The three partners of the firm were all devoted to Bapu. They were not vegetarians and drank moderately, but they never made Ramdas drink or give up vegetarianism. Ramdas Bhai stayed with Gidumal and Govind Chhitra. All three fell sick in the influenza epidemic of 1919.

'Gidumal and Chhitra took very good care of me, though they had fever themselves', records Ramdas.

The job with the Gidumal partners gave Ramdas a good experience of the silk cloth business and, as a result, the Hind Trading Company offered him a job at £20 a month along with board and lodging. He worked with them for six months. He next moved to the firm of Mehta, Khandaria and Sons. Their head office was at Louise Treecord in North Transvaal. Umiya Shankar Mehta and Mohanlal Khandaria, partners in the firm, were devotees of Bapu and Ramdas Bhai was treated as a member of the family. They paid him £15 a month along with all other facilities. They had seventeen branches and their relations with other Indian and foreign firms were good. They sold agricultural implements and food to Dutch and native agriculturists in the villages. They also purchased ground-nut and maize in the wholesale market when the crop came in, and sold these at retail rates. Salesmen of Dutch and other European firms came to their firm to take orders for cloth, etc.

The Indians in South Africa were keenly interested in India's freedom struggle and sent funds to the Indian National Congress from time to time. Mehta and Khandaria hoped that Ramdas would take charge of one of their seventeen shops and run an independent business of his own, but Ramdas wanted to go back to India. Even though he thought of returning later to accept the offer, he never did so.

In 1921 the Congress session was to be held at Ahmedabad and Ramdas wished to attend it. He left for India in 1921 with savings of £105 and travelled as a deck passenger.

Ramdas Bhai attended the Congress session at Ahmedabad and saw the khadi exhibition which was set up that year for the first time. At this session Bapu used the slogan 'Swaraj hangs by the thread of the spinning wheel.' He had promised Swaraj in a year if Indians carried out his four-fold constructive programme honestly and effectively. The four items were khadi, removal of untouchability, prohibition, and Hindu-Muslim unity.

Everyone was ready for the launching of the Civil Disobedience movement when news of the Chauri Chaura brutality was received: an infuriated mob had burnt alive twenty-one policemen and a police station. Bapu was so distressed that he suspended

the Movement despite stiff opposition from other leaders. The Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli on 11 and 12 February 1922 and the resolution suspending the struggle was passed.

On 8 March Bapu left Delhi for Sabarmati after an AICC meeting, and Ramdas Bhai left for Wardha with Jamnalal. From Wardha Ramdas Bhai intended to visit Ellora and Ajanta and reach Bardoli on 10 March, but at Bhusawal a railway employee handed him a telegram which announced Bapu's arrest. Jawaharlal Nehru, his wife Kamala, and sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, were travelling by the same train and Ramdas Bhai broke the news to them. He gave up the idea of going to Ellora and Ajanta and all four proceeded to Bardoli, from where they went on, via Surat, to Ahmedabad to see Bapu in Sabarmati Jail. Bapu was kept in a cell normally reserved for those sentenced to hanging, but Ramdas records, 'Bapu had a hearty laugh when he saw us.'

He advised everyone to apply themselves diligently in constructive work. To Ramdas Bhai he said, 'Your arrival is a God-send. Jail-going in South Africa was different. The British Government here is determined to crush the Congress. I do not know how long I will be in prison. Separation from me will go hard on Ba. Harilal is at Calcutta, Manilal is in South Africa and Devadas is doing excellent work at Allahabad. You stay with Ba.' On 18 March 1922 Bapu's case came up for hearing. He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, and Shankarlal Banker to two years and a fine of Rs 2,000, in default of which he was to spend another six months in prison.

In 1923 Ramdas Bhai went to see Harilal in Calcutta. Harilal's firm, 'All-India Stores', was doing reasonably well and his partner, Ranchhodji Desai, was a clever businessman. But Harilal was a spendthrift and Ranchhodji could not keep him in check. Ramdas has written, 'I tried my level best to persuade Harilal Bhai to devote more attention to his business and cut down his expenses. But Harilal Bhai had been deeply disappointed because his ambition to study in England to become a Barrister had been frustrated. Gokhale had also advised Bapu to send his sons for higher education. But Bapu felt that he should give this benefit to someone else rather than one of his

own sons. All three of us were disappointed, but Harilal was hurt the most. He did not like my advice and I did not succeed with him.'

When in Calcutta Ramdas Bhai also received a summons from the government. His name had been appearing as Editor, Printer and Publisher of *Young India* and the *Navajivan* journals after the previous editors had been arrested, though the actual work was being done by Kaka Saheb Kalelkar. The summons asked him to show cause why the government should not take action against him and Kakasaheb for three articles that had appeared in the journals. Ramdas Bhai was delighted that, at last, he would be able to go to jail. He packed his things, including a book on Mathematics by Lakdawala and *Hindu Dharam Balpothi* to study in jail, and left for Ahmedabad. But when the case came up for hearing, to his deep disappointment only Kaka Saheb was sentenced and he released!

So Ramdas Bhai joined Kasturba at Sabarmati, and along with her and other women workers he hawked khadi in Surat, Navasari, Bardoli, etc. Bapu was allowed to meet five people every month and could receive one letter a fortnight. Ramdas Bhai took Ba to meet Bapu every month at Sabarmati Jail and later in Yeravda, when Bapu was shifted there.

Ramdas Bhai went to the Gaya Congress where a tussle between the 'pro-changers' and 'no-changers' occurred. The 'pro-changers' included well-known stalwarts like Vithalbhai Patel, Motilal Nehru and Deshabandhu Das. They stood for Council-entry. The no-changers included Rajaji, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Babu, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who were not so well known at that time, and who stood for no-change in the policy and programme of the Congress till Bapu came out of jail. Surprisingly, they won with a big majority. From Gaya, Ramdas Bhai went to see the khadi production centre at Malkhachak with Binode Babu and Dhawaja Babu, and was much impressed.

Around this time Bapu was admitted to Sassoon Hospital for appendicitis and fifteen days later he was unconditionally released. He was taken for rest at Juhu by Shantikumar Morarji. Ramdas and Kasturba joined him, and Bapu started teaching Ramdas for an hour daily. He used the two books which Ramdas Bhai had packed to take to jail. Bapu also arranged for

Andrews to teach Ramdas Bhai English from 8 to 9 a.m. and music lessons with a Maharashtrian teacher were fixed up from 5 to 7 in the evening.

In 1924, when Bapu toured India, Ramdas Bhai joined Dakshinamurti Vidyalaya which had very good teachers. But before long news of Bapu's Delhi fast against Hindu-Muslim riots came and he rushed to Sabarmati, taking Ba with him, to be at Bapu's bedside.

Bapu again tried to give academic lessons to Ramdas Bhai. But it was difficult for him to be regular. He, therefore, entrusted this work to Vinoba so that there was no interruption. Vinobaji taught Ramdas Mathematics and Sanskrit.

The Kathiawad Political Conference, inaugurated by Bapu, was held at Bhavnagar. Ramdas Bhai served there as a volunteer. After the conference Bapu went to see the constructive work in Kathiawar and Ramdas Bhai went with him. Bapu saw the khadi work at Amreli and left Ramdas there to learn all about the production and sale of khadi. Ramdas Bhai was at Amreli from the summer of 1926 to March 1928. The making of khadi for self use was encouraged at this centre. Ramdas travelled from village to village to popularize this scheme. Amreli Khadi Karyalaya had obtained 150 maunds of cotton, out of which 50 maund were given for this scheme. About 20 villages used it to produce khadi for self use.

In February 1928, during his Amreli days Ramdas Bhai was married in Ba and Bapu's presence to Nirmala, the daughter of Amritlal Hirachand Vora, a doctor in the government hospital at Porbandar. Chhaganlal Gandhi's wife Kashi Behn and Harilal Gandhi's wife Gulab also came from the Vora family. Bapu decided that only inter-caste marriages would be performed in the Ashram thereafter.

Ramdas Bhai brought his bride to Amreli and they were both looking forward to setting up their own household there, when he learnt that Sardar Patel had started the Bardoli Satyagraha—a no-tax campaign. He asked Bapu for permission to go and see it. Bapu said he could go if he wished to participate in the satyagraha. So the idea of setting up a household at Amreli was given up and Ramdas Bhai went to Bardoli to join the Satyagraha.

The Sardar had organized the movement with his usual

thoroughness and throngs were coming to Bardoli Ashram from all over the taluqa. The kitchen was entrusted to Ramdas Bhai. He had often to feed over 250 people. The food was simple—rice and dal—and the same for everyone.

The Bardoli Satyagraha had a successful end. The Sardar then made Ramdas Bhai manager of the Ashram. He and his wife worked for Rs 45 a month. They had to manage many guests, look after the sick in the Ashram and cook for them in their own kitchen. The salary was not enough, but Ramdas Bhai would not ask for more. Ramdas Bhai has written that the Sardar came to know of his financial problem and quietly put Rs 300 in his account. This was the Sardar, a hard disciplinarian on the surface, but with a very tender heart. He always took care of his workers' genuine needs.

Bapu was very pleased with Ramdas for the good care he took of the sick entrusted to him. Ramdas Bhai has narrated several instances of such work being entrusted to him by Bapu, who wrote to Ramdas on 12 May 1928: 'I have hardly seen anyone as fortunate as you. I have watched you from your childhood and I feel that you are destined to serve. Service can be rendered in many ways, but it is your destiny to serve the sick. You have served me and Ba, Sundaram and the Naidoo brothers. You have never tried to run away from such duty. That is why it has now come to your lot to serve Kanti.' Kanti Parekh had been attacked in a communal riot at Surat and removed to hospital in a moribund condition with several serious injuries. Ramdas was working as Manager of the Bardoli Ashram at that time and Sardar Patel sent him to look after Kanti. The very fact that Gandhiji's son was nursing him made everyone alert and ensured the best medical and nursing service for the patient, who recovered from his serious injuries.

Then came the Salt Satyagraha of 1929–30. Ramdas Bhai was the leader of a party which offered satyagraha on 6 March at Surat. He was sent to prison for six months. In jail with him were Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Mahadev Bhai and Nanabhai Bhatt. They helped Ramdas with his studies. The jail had many classes going on, on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharat*, History, Mathematics and languages, and Abbas Saheb Tyabji even taught French to Mahadev Bhai every morning.

On his release, Ramdas Bhai went to Surat where Ba was staying in a satyagrahis' camp and carrying on khadi work along with other women workers. He wanted to take Ba to his home at Bardoli. Nirmalabehn had spent the whole day cleaning up the house and most of the night in rearranging it to welcome her mother-in-law. But early next morning the police came and confiscated the Ashram, including their house. Ramdas Bhai and Nirmalabehn by then had a baby, and the police did not spare even the baby's bottle. The three joined Kasturba at Surat, where Ramdas Bhai went with the ladies in hawking khadi.

Thakkar Bapa was expected in Surat about this time and Ramdas Bhai wanted to receive him at the station. He was told not to do so as it might lead to his arrest, but he did go—and was arrested. After spending a week in the lock-up at Bardoli, he was taken to Surat Sub-Jail and, after spending six months there, he was moved to Sabarmati Jail. He was released before his term was over, thanks to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

Bapu came back from the second Round Table Conference on 28 December 1931 and was soon back in jail. Ramdas Bhai and Ba went round the villages of Bardoli to explain the situation to the people. The Government was arresting people even without their offering Satyagraha and Ramdas Bhai was re-arrested and sent to prison for a year and a half. He was taken to Sabarmati Jail and after two weeks shifted to Yeravda. There were over 2,000 Satyagrahi prisoners there: they were kept in tents surrounded by barbed-wire fencing. The food for those in the camp jail came from Yeravda Prison. Some Satyagrahi prisoners wanted to go on a hunger strike, but Ramdas Bhai did not think they should do so and tried to dissuade them. They heckled him, but he persisted till they quietened down and accepted his advice. These people were raw Satyagrahis and did not understand the working of Satyagraha, so Ramdas helped them by making them understand. But when a close associate of Bapu faltered, Ramdas complained to Bapu. Bapu was angry. He said, 'What do you want me to do? Hang him?' Ramdas Bhai calmly replied, 'No, but you should know how imperfect are your Satyagrahis on the touchstone of truth and non-violence.' The gentle Ramdas could stand up to his great father when he thought it necessary.

Bapu went on a fast against the Communal Award while he was in Yeravda Jail. Ba and Ramdas Bhai were allowed to be with him. Nirmala Behn had refused to undertake the long journey to see Ramdas Bhai for just 20 minutes when he was in jail, but she came during Bapu's fast and spent half the day with Ba and Bapu and Ramdas Bhai. It is well known how the British Government had to withdraw the Communal Award and accept the agreement reached between Dr Ambedkar and Gandhiji. Gurudev Tagore had come to Yeravda on the fifth day of the fast. He stroked Bapu's head and whispered 'I came flying on the wings of peace.' Ba handed him a glass of *mosumbi* juice which he, in turn, gave to Bapu to break his fast.

Ramdas Bhai had lost a great deal of weight in jail and was admitted to hospital, where he was given some milk and butter as diet supplements. He shared these with some of the non-satyagrahi long-term prisoners who would approach him as he sat down for his meals. Jamnalal Bajaj was also in the jail hospital at that time. On learning of his experience, he told Ramdas Bhai, that after their release, he would take charge of him and see that he was healthy and happy and could earn an honourable living.

Jamnalalji gave Ramdas the job of manager of the Khadi Bhandar in Wardha on a salary of Rs 75 a month. The hours of work were long and there was no holiday even on Sundays. Ramdas could not go for walks and so lost his appetite. He tried to live on oranges, but still felt heavy in the stomach. He went for a change to Sarbarmati, fell ill with malaria and had to be treated in hospital. Ba joined him and looked after Ramdas, who now felt he should go to Bombay where he could work and also get back his health.

One of Bapu's devotees helped Ramdas get a job in the Mysore Emporium at Rs 100 a month. It sold Mysore silk and *agarbatti*. Ramdas Bhai was also to have 2 per cent of the profit of the Kalbadevi branch of the emporium, where he worked. This was in 1935, and conversions to Islam were also taking place on a large scale. Harilal Gandhi was one of the converts. Bapu asked Ramdas to go to Seth Zakaria Saheb and meet him and Harilal. Ramdas Bhai had a meeting with both—Zakaria and Harilal—after some difficulty. Zakaria told him confidently that the Muslims would do for Harilal what his own community had

not been able to do. But after a month Zakaria realized that a mere change of name does not change a man and his habits. Harilal continued to be an irresponsible alcoholic and was later reconverted to Hinduism by the Arya Samaj, but with no better results.

Unfortunately, Ramdas Bhai's health did not improve in Bombay. Kallanbach came to India about this time and Ramdas Bhai decided to go back with him to South Africa for a change. On 8 July 1937, as they were about to leave for Durban, they had to get off the steamer as they had not been vaccinated for smallpox and refused to be vaccinated. They later sailed on an Indian boat.

At Phoenix, Manilal handed *Indian Opinion* over to Ramdas as he had been wanting to visit India with his family. The paper had financial problems and Ramdas Bhai worked hard to help solve them. But he could not get the rest he had come for, and when health did not improve, he returned to India.

During his absence Bapu had sent Nirmalabehn to Kanya Gurukul in Dehra Dun, for a year; she studied there and passed the examinations, of Kovid and Visharad (equivalent to Inter and B.A.). Ramdas Bhai went on to Poona for a nature cure at Dinshaw Mehta's clinic and after that decided to take up a job with Tata Oil Mill Company so that he could educate his children. He was at Bombay for about six months where he learnt the work. After five or six years Ramdas became manager of the Nagpur Depot.

His home in Nagpur became an extension of Sevagram Ashram. Bapu sent many guests who would at times turn up unannounced at midnight. Ramdas Bhai occasionally resented this, but not his wife. When Nirmalabehn came to the Aga Khan's Palace in 1942 during Ba's illness, Bapu took her to Mirabehn's room to show her Mirabehn's artistic arrangement of flowers in her 'Balkrishna Temple'. Nirmalabehn said, 'I have no time left for art after I look after the guests and the members of my family. To look after them well is my art and worship'. Bapu agreed that it was a real art to keep people happy and run a household that gave satisfaction to all. In the late 1940s Ramdas Bhai retired from his Tata's job and took up khadi work at Nagpur, from where he and his family came to Sevagram over the

weekends and on holidays. In June 1951, after the education of his children was over, Sumitra having done an M.A. LL.B., Usha a B.A. and Kana having become an engineer, Ramdas finally retired and came to stay at Sevagram with Nirmala Behn.

It will be seen that Ramdas Bhai tried for only such jobs as were available to the ordinary people. He never considered himself higher or better than the common man and the thought of taking advantage of his birth and his parental or personal contacts for his or his family's benefit never crossed his mind. People respected him as Gandhiji's son, but he always tried his utmost to be treated as an average Indian. He had to carry the responsibility of his birth and live up to the expectations people had of Gandhiji's son. But when it came to deriving any benefit from the relationship, Ramdas shrank from it and insisted on being treated as an ordinary middle-class citizen. This led to a constant struggle and to several changes of jobs.

Ramdas Bhai passed away on 15 April 1969 at Bombay. Nirmala Behn still lives at Sevagram and is a mother figure for visitors and the inmates of the institutions nearabout. She still believes in nature cure and from time to time visits the Urli Kanchan Nature Cure Centre started by Gandhiji. She invested Ramdas Bhai's small Provident Fund in fixed deposit, and finds it gives her enough to live on. Nirmala Behn in India and Manilal Bhai's wife, Sushila Behn, in South Africa keep the candle of idealism burning bright, demonstrating Bapu's teachings in their own lives.

SUSHILA NAYAR

Devadas Gandhi

In 1920, the year following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, I had gone to Sabarmati Ashram when, one fine day, I received a wire from Gandhiji asking me to join him on his tour of north India. The non-cooperation era had just begun, and Gandhiji had launched on one of his whirlwind tours that became a familiar feature in the years that followed. I joined him at Delhi. It was there that I really came to know Devadas, the youngest son of Mahatma Gandhi.

Devadas was hardly twenty when I first met him in Sabarmati Ashram, a little earlier. He was then passing through his probation, taking lessons in singing, playing the sitar, and in Sanskrit. Vinoba used to teach him *Raghuvansa*. After the evening prayers, Devadas would give the Ashram inmates a resume of the news from the daily newspapers. His comments showed a maturity of judgement which even a professional news commentator might envy. He took his full share in the daily chores of the Ashram—scavenging, scrubbing cooking vessels, kitchen work, etc. In all these, he introduced an element of dignity, elegance and cheer by dint of his personality, which made it a joy to do such chores in his company.

We took to each other instantly. Before long, we became inseparable. Devadas had not completed his twentieth year, but I could not help being struck by his precocity, maturity of judgement and instinct for action bordering on genius. Gandhiji had a very limited staff at that time and the volume of work that he had to deal with was staggering. He was putting Devadas through his paces. Sometimes he would ask him to dispose of letters containing baffling conundrums relating to moral issues, particularly non-violence, himself checking the answers before the letters were dispatched.

In one of the letters a correspondent had asked what Gandhiji's view was about keeping a dog. The answer involved a

subtle point concerning Gandhiji's philosophy of life—whether the expense and confinement of the animal were justified in terms of non-possession and non-violence. The young aid's reply ran: 'My father does not approve of keeping animals as pets, but he does not mind if a dog is kept for protection as a night-watch.' In the course of a tour Gandhiji gave Devadas an article by C. Y. Chintamani which had appeared in the *Leader* criticizing khadi, and asked him to prepare a reply. He afterwards described Devadas's piece as a 'complete answer' and reproduced it in *Young India* under the caption 'The *Leader* Misled.'

The habit of original thinking stood Devadas in good stead all through life. It was the result no less of the training which he had received than of his inherited intellectual vigour. Like Gandhiji, he never shirked the labour of mental application. He had for his age a remarkable political sense, but, even more than his inborn journalistic talent and political shrewdness, it was his delicate consideration for others, his impeccable moral sense, his tact, diplomatic skill and address that Gandhiji treasured. He was only a youngster when Gandhiji, after the Champaran Satyagraha campaign, sent him to deliver a message to Sir Frank Sly, later the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, and explain to him the situation in Champaran. Sir Frank afterwards told Gandhiji how charmed he was by his young emissary. On another occasion, Gandhiji sent Devadas to see Aurobindo Ghose on his behalf to find out whether he could not be persuaded to come into the Non-cooperation Movement. Devadas saw the sage of Pondicherry, delivered to him Gandhiji's message and brought back his reply. Gandhiji was completely satisfied with his performance.

Gandhiji used to say that it was not what a man does but how he does it that gives his true measure. Every one of his workers had to pass through a series of tests from scavenging to work in the scullery. Devadas distinguished himself in whatever he did and did everything, however humble, with equal zest. By his intelligence, resourcefulness and the unfailing sunshine of his wit and humour, he converted the performance of even commonplace chores into a delectable experience and source of unmixed joy.

In the latter half of 1921 Gandhiji sent Devadas to Allahabad

to assist Mahadev Desai take charge of Pandit Motilal Nehru's *Independent*. I was also sent to join the group. By the time I reached Allahabad, an order had been served on that daily to deposit a security under the Press Act. The paper had in consequence to close down, as it would have been contrary to the principle of non-violent non-cooperation to furnish a security. But under Gandhiji's instructions *Independent* was brought out in manuscript form. About a dozen or two hand-written copies were prepared every day. Some were mailed to the leading nationalist dailies, which reproduced them in full, Gandhiji himself taking the lead by publishing in his Young India 'gleanings from the hand-written *Independent*'. The authorities answered by arresting Mahadev, whereupon Devadas promptly stepped into the breach and took over the editorship of the manuscript *Independent*.

Besides the editorship of *Independent*, the responsibility of conducting the Non-co-operation Movement in the city in the absence of senior Congress leaders, who were all in prison, fell upon Devadas's young shoulders. In both capacities Devadas made things hum and distinguished himself by his mastery of the strategy of non-violence. He set the whole city astir by organizing the picketing of government schools and colleges and of foreign cloth and liquor shops. He established *chowkies* to render voluntary help to anyone in difficulty, and popular panchayats for the settlement of disputes by arbitration instead of litigation. He also held public meetings in defiance of the prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. All this he did with such consummate organizing skill as to leave many a veteran Congress worker staring. It did not take him long to earn his well-merited rest as His Majesty's non-paying guest in prison.

At Allahabad, Devadas and I lived in Anand Bhawan, where Pandit Motilalji had made arrangements for our stay and allotted us a couple of rooms and a kitchen. We started the day with a breakfast of parched gram and curd, walked to the Provincial Congress Committee office where we worked till late at night, returned home to cook our meal and retire for the day, completely tired out. Pandit Motilalji and Jawaharlalji were then in prison. Jawaharlalji on his release thought that we were carrying to an excess Gandhiji's principle of voluntary poverty, and got

the Provincial Congress Committee to sanction a maintenance allowance of Rs 50 or Rs 75 a month for each of us. But since we had become accustomed to our simple way of life, we did not feel the need to avail of the offer.

On hearing of the Chauri Chaura massacre, Devadas rushed to the spot. From there he sent Gandhiji a true, authentic and unvarnished account of the happenings. The angry mob had set fire to the police station and the policemen been burnt alive. Gandhiji interpreted the incident as being symptomatic of the spreading taint of violence and decided to suspend the civil disobedience part of the Non-cooperation Campaign. Many were shocked by the decision, including Pandit Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlalji. But, later, both appreciated the far-seeing wisdom of the historic Bardoli decision suspending Civil Disobedience indefinitely.

Gandhiji used to point to Devadas as the proudest vindication of his system of education. Although, like his brothers, Devadas had never been to a school or a university, his ability was equal to, if not better than, that of any Oxford or Cambridge graduate. He made his mark as a member of his father's secretariat staff and then in the journalistic world. But the most impressive qualities that he inherited from his father were his judgement and capacity to successfully handle all sorts of men with diverse talents, outlook and temperament, his matchless tact, suavity and personal charm. Never through the many years of our long association did I see Devadas once lose his temper or raise his voice in the course of a debate, however heated.

Devadas was a member of Gandhiji's entourage when he went to London for the second Round Table Conference. A brief thrust-and-party encounter that he had with Bernard Shaw during our visit to London at that time stands out as a *tour de force* of Devadas's razor-sharp wit. Devadas and I were climbing up the staircase in 88 Knightsbridge where Gandhiji was staying during the day. On the landing we ran into Bernard Shaw as he emerged from Babu's room. Recognizing Devadas, Bernard Shaw turned to him and said, 'Young man, in our country it's the custom for children not to agree with their parents.' Without turning a hair, Devadas replied: 'They agreed in the elections all right'. Even the redoubtable Shaw attempted no rejoinder. H. S. L. Polak's sister presently joined us. Shaw remarked to

her, 'That was Mahatma major'. Then, pointing to Devadas, he added, 'And here is Mahatma minor'.

It has been well said that a man's worth is measured by how he faces life and how he faces death. The first test came for Devadas in 1927 and revealed his full stature. Devadas had been sent to Madras to teach Hindi in the South and help Rajaji. There he met Rajaji's youngest daughter, Lakshmi, and both were soon deeply in love. The story of how Devadas walked on the razor's edge of *dharma* and unfalteringly went through the four-year period of waiting in faith and constancy, austerity, toil and self-discipline as a penance prescribed by Bapu before he consented to the marriage with Lakshmi, reads like an immortal tale from the pages of romance. There was a furore in the circles of die-hard orthodoxy when Devadas and Lakshmi were married. One frenzied correspondent wrote to Gandhiji demanding that the breach of the rules of caste be punished by roasting the delinquents alive on a slow fire! Gandhiji answered next day in a public speech by commending the intercaste marriage as an 'ideal marriage', in keeping with the highest traditions of Hinduism.

On his return from the Round Table Conference, Devadas was married to Lakshmi and soon after that, was again imprisoned while he was on his way to Delhi to take over as Editor of the *Hindustan Times* and settle down with his wife. He had to be released before the expiry of his term on account of a severe attack of typhoid, which nearly cost him his life. This was his last major imprisonment. Years later, in a contempt of court case against the *Hindustan Times*, he, as the managing editor, was asked to pay a fine while a correspondent of his paper, who was implicated in the same case, was sentenced to imprisonment. Rather than pay the fine, Devadas preferred to share the prison with his correspondent, thereby showing that 'the roses and lilies of life' in the capital had not in the least affected his hard fibre.

Shortly after Devadas joined the *Hindustan Times*, he again fell seriously ill. Determined to make a success of his new assignment, he had overworked. His vision was affected and any attempt to read precipitated an arterial spasm. He was advised complete rest, but he insisted on having the entire paper

read out to him daily and unfailingly dictated his comments and instructions to the staff on each issue. Then only would he rest. An outstanding service which Devadas rendered to his profession was his crusade against the yellow press.

'No knight was ever hero to his valet' is a shrewd old saying. A man's true measure is provided by his domestic life, the way he conducts himself in his home, the impress he leaves on members of his family—his wife and children. During a visit to us a few weeks before Devadas left on that visit to South India from which he never returned, Mrs Devadas Gandhi confided to my wife that not once during nearly a quarter of a century of married life had she experienced a quarrel with her husband or heard as much as a harsh word from his lips—a unique record of ahimsa in the domestic field, 'the most important school for learning the ABC of *ahimsa*' as Gandhiji used to call it. Devadas was an ideal husband and father. I have seldom seen a quieter or a more peaceful and happy home, or better behaved children, than Devadas's.

Gandhiji attributed Devadas's extraordinary balance and maturity to the fact that Devadas was born when he, his father, had overcome himself and his relationship with Kasturba had come to be more that of a friend and companion than a husband, as that term is commonly understood. This relationship of a friend and companion they extended to their children also. Devadas once told me a touching story in illustration of this. He was hardly eight or ten when he, with a group of Ashram children, all younger than he, was left at the Phoenix Settlement, with the parents and elders of most of them in jail. 'We all felt very lonely and depressed', Devadas recounted. 'Bapu seated us on a table and began to sing to us the Poet Nazir's verse:

गाम मवेरे चिड़ियां आकर चू चू चू करती है।

Minutes later we too were singing the verses with him and romping and hopping on the table, our arms akimbo in imitation of the birds in the song, all our depression and loneliness gone!

Gandhiji was a loving parent but a stern teacher—harder than flint even as he was softer than silk. Devadas grew up under him in the stern school of discipline and austerity, like any other civil resister's child in the Phoenix Settlement. He

enjoyed no exclusive privilege and shared equally all the hardships and deprivations with the rest of the children. Devadas once recalled, ‘ “That is just as it should be,” father would say to us, “even the Prince of Wales, when he went in for naval training, had to scrub the decks and subsist on coarse bread and black coffee like any common sailor. It is this national discipline that has made England a great nation.” ’

Bapu had high hopes that Devadas would follow in his footsteps and take up much of his burden, but he equally believed that everybody should be true to his natural self. So when Devadas selected a different path for himself, Bapu not only did not object but gave him his full approval and blessing. On his part, Devadas, having selected to following the middle way as being more commensurate with the truth of his essential being, adorned it by his exemplary observance of the law of moderation and restraint, which the ancient Hindu tradition puts on a par with the way of austerity and penance.

Devadas often had to experience the ordeal of a conflict between his loyalty to his father's ideals and his love and devotion towards him as a son. I witnessed one such inner struggle, and a sacred, elevating experience it was. The circumstances at the time of Gandhiji's last fast at Delhi in January 1948 were so forbidding and the odds so heavy that in those days of mass madness the chances of Gandhiji coming out of his ordeal alive looked very slender indeed to many. In the face of this, for once, Devadas's filial affection got the better of his philosophy and he made a forlorn thirteenth-hour attempt to wean his father from his resolve. In a note to Bapu, in which was concentrated all his power of ratiocination and persuasion, Devadas wrote:

My chief concern and my main argument against your fast is that you have surrendered to impatience, whereas your mission by its very nature demands infinite patience. You do not seem to have realized what a tremendous success your patient labour has achieved. It has saved hundreds upon thousands of lives and may save more—Your death will not achieve what you can accomplish by living. I would therefore beseech you to pay heed to my entreaty and give up your fast.

This evoked from Gandhiji a reply that will live as an epic of faith. He did not agree that his decision to undertake the fast was hasty. He said:

It was quick action no doubt, in the sense that it took me very little time to prepare the draft. Behind this lightning quickness was my four days' heart-churning and prayer. Quickness was the fruit of this prayerful cogitation. It cannot, therefore, be called hasty according to my definition of it or for that matter by the definition of anybody who knows. In a statement like this there is always scope for vetting and improving the language. It took me no time therefore to accept the verbal changes that you suggested in this regard. As for the propriety of the fast, I felt no such need to listen to you or anybody else's pleadings. Still I did lend ear to you all. That only bespeaks my patience and humility. Your worry and your arguments are equally vain. You are of course a friend and a friend of a very high order at that. But you cannot get over the son in you. Your concern is natural and I respect it. But your argument betrays impatience and superficiality. I regard this step of mine as the limit of patience. Is patience, which kills its very objective, patience or folly? I cannot accept credit for what has been achieved since my coming to Delhi. It would be self-conceit on my part to do so. No mortal can say with certainty as to how many lives were saved as a result of my labours. God, the omniscient, alone could do that. And does it not betray sheer ignorance to attribute sudden loss of patience to one who has been patience personified since September last?

Pragmatically speaking, it was only when in terms of human effort I had exhausted all resources and realized my utter helplessness that I laid my head on God's lap. That is the inner meaning and significance of my fasting. You would do well to read and ponder the deep meaning of *Gajendra Moksha*—the greatest of epics as I have called it. Then alone perhaps you will be able to appreciate properly the step I have taken. Your last sentence is a charming token of your affection. But your affection is rooted in attachment or delusion. Attachment does not become enlightenment because it relates to a public cause. So long as one has not completely shed all attachment to life and learnt to regard both life and death with the same utter indifference, it would be vain conceit to say that one wants to live because by his life alone could a certain cause be served. 'Strive while you live' is a beautiful saying, but there is a *hiatus* in it. Striving has to be in the spirit of detachment. Now perhaps you will understand why I cannot concede your request. God sent this fast. He alone will end it if and when He wills. In the meantime it behoves you, me and everybody to have faith that it is equally well whether he preserves my life or ends it, and to act accordingly. My only prayer therefore can be that God may make my spirit strong during the fast lest the desire to live may tempt me prematurely to end my fast.

Both father and son lived to laugh at the latter's fears and temporary eclipse of his faith, and to thank God who never fails those who put faith in Him.

Devadas's whole life was an epic of love and devotion towards

his parents. Unyielding in his affection, he was even more concerned lest their greatness be tarnished in any way. This earned him from his loving father the proud title of 'The most conscientious of my conscience-keepers.' After his parents' death, the perpetuation of their memory and passing it on to posterity became the passion of Devadas's life. He took infinite pains to preserve Bapu's recorded voice, letters, relics and documentaries and in instituting Friday prayers at Rajghat in commemoration of Bapu's martyrdom. His devoted dedication to the advancement of some of the lost causes that were dear to Bapu's heart has laid upon the shoulders of all of us who cherish Devadas and Bapu's memory a sacred responsibility which we dare not shuffle off. To mention only one of them, he once told me that it was his dream that in his lifetime the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi would relieve the Government completely of the burden of handling the leprosy problem in India, the service of those suffering from leprosy being so dear to Bapu's heart.

The final call came in 1957. Devadas had gone to Bombay, taking with him the page-proofs of my *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, with a view to its serialization in the *Hindustan Times*. He had a heart attack there. At first nobody took it very seriously. But when he was put under the oxygen tent he knew that the end was near. The agony caused by the anginal pain was excruciating, but his only anxiety was about others. Regardless of his suffering, he continued to comfort and fortify his grief-stricken wife and children and friends almost till his last breath, when snapping all earthly ties he retreated within himself to be gathered unto his Maker.

I felt and still feel forlorn.

Bapu often used to say to us, 'No single person will represent me after I am gone, but a little bit of me will live in many of you.' Devadas was one of those in whom a good bit of Bapu's flame lived. Devadas was not merely Bapu's physical son, but inherited many of his father's qualities, short of his Mahatma-ship. Although to be true to himself he took his own line in life instead of forcing himself into conformity with Gandhiji's pattern, there was not a thing he did that had not Gandhiji's full approval. His faith in his father's mission grew with the passage of time instead of suffering any diminution. It was a unique relationship between father and son based on deep affection,

understanding, sympathy and mutual faith that transcended all differences, whether intellectual or temperamental.

No less remarkable was his attachment to his mother. Adoration is the word for it. I can recall no more touching scene than his tender service to Kasturba while she was on her death-bed in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp. This filial devotion was the foundation on which Devadas's whole personality was built. It provided a living demonstration of the truth of Gandhiji's maxim that dedicated service of one's parents holds the key not only to one's moral but intellectual growth also—in short to one's all-round progress.

The Incomparable Sardar

It is difficult to believe that the Sardar is no more. He was the principal pillar of the edifice of which Gandhiji was the architect and Pandit Nehru the corner stone. I do not know of another instance of such complete surrender of judgement and will on the part of a lieutenant to his general as of the Sardar's to Gandhiji during the days of India's struggle for freedom. 'When I am there, the Sardar's thinking is paralysed', Gandhiji used to say. Things changed in later years, but the basic loyalty and the bond of personal affection that united him and Gandhiji continued unimpaired to the last.

There was a standing joke between the Sardar and Gandhiji that neither was to precede the other into the next world. During his last days when sometimes Gandhiji, unable to bear the agony of what was taking place around him, would talk about God taking him away, the Sardar used to chafe him: 'So you want to get out of your commitment and leave me in the lurch!' The Sardar had really no desire left to live after Gandhiji, but he had the will and the determination to continue to shoulder the burden handed down by the Master, to whom his loyalty was pledged as never a soldier's was to his general.

I can never forget the scene when, the first to arrive at Birla House on getting the news of Gandhiji's assassination, the Sardar sat with a wan, haggard look by Gandhiji's lifeless body, face in Gandhiji's clothes and sobbed convulsively like a child. The Sardar tried to soothe him, affectionately patting him on the back. 'Other people can find relief in tears', he told me afterwards, 'I cannot weep but it reduces my brain to pulp'.

To the world the Sardar is known as the fierce, dour warrior, with a forbidding countenance, who bore down all opposition with ruthless determination and never shed a tear over whatever

he did. Not many know, and some will even find it difficult to believe that as a schoolboy this man with an iron mask once actually mothered a motherless baby with a bunch of school-mates when a friend of theirs lost his wife. By turns they absented themselves from their classes to take care of the child till proper arrangements for its nursing were made. Behind that granite cast of features beat a big, warm, generous heart, full of the milk of human kindness—as sensitive to pain as it was to affection. But he never allowed his feelings or emotions to get the better of him or come to the surface. He harnessed them to his inflexible iron will and determination. It gave him that dynamic quality for which he became known.

The Sardar was dubbed a friend of capitalists and princes. Yet it was he who put an end to the princely order; and the capitalists, too, knew that he was no friend of the capitalistic system either. They would have to reform it and play the game if they wanted to retain his friendship and not go the way of the princely order. He made a broad distinction between the men and the system they represented. His friendship with individual capitalists and princes was rooted in the assumption that they were not devoid of patriotism and good sense. He was far too practical to underrate their experience and know-how, and knew how badly the country needed both. And so, while he liquidated the princely order he retained the friendship and loyalty of many of the princes. Today some of them are using their talents and experience creditably in the service of the country.

The Sardar had an innate distrust of slogans and 'isms'; above all, he hated hypocrisy and cant. He had himself seen how people who abused the capitalists most vituperatively were not averse to becoming capitalists themselves given a chance, and many of them, when put to the test, betrayed in the little acts of their daily life some of the common weaknesses and failings of the capitalists whom they denounced. His was an essentially human approach. He put all men on the same level with himself and he made no demand upon them for which he was not himself prepared. The wiser among the capitalists realized that the Sardar was trying to save them from themselves and in spite of themselves, and they clung to him. He exploited them—if one may use that expression—for the cause. He was too shrewd to let anybody exploit him.

At one time the Sardar was criticized as being reactionary. But his critics soon found that he was more revolutionary than they. At Bardoli he made a revolution while they had only talked of one. He was not opposed to any reform however radical, provided it could be shown to be practicable and in the best interests of the country. Born and bred a peasant, he had a peasant's dislike of doctrinaire hair-splitting, utopian, book-learned theories, and empty talk. Blunt of speech, he made no high-sounding promises, raised no false hopes, but people knew that when he willed a thing it happened. When he said something, they knew what it meant and that he meant it, and they trusted him. He indulged in no bluff nor could anybody bluff him.

Some looked upon the Sardar as an enemy of the Muslims and of Pakistan. Nothing could be more erroneous. He no doubt gave first place to the security of the country—there he would take no risks. But I know how firmly he held that such Muslims as chose to remain in India and regarded it as their home, must get a fair and square deal. The truth of the matter is that he never really bothered about either abstract philosophy or formal religion. He was a typical matter-of-fact soul, too big to be merely anti-anybody. But he was anti-humbug and those who used religion to cover ulterior ends got short shrift from him. Unlike Gandhiji, he did not suffer fools or fanatics gladly, and as an administrator he never forgot, though he was ever-ready to forgive if there was genuine repentance and a firm guarantee of good conduct for the future. A hard hitting, straight-from-the-shoulder man, he was a sport. For snivellers, whiners and backbiters he had nothing but contempt. When those who were beaten at their own game afterwards went to Gandhiji with a look of martyred innocence and in hyperbolic language invoked principles which they had themselves failed to observe, the Sardar seared them with the shafts of his sarcasm, which sometimes brought an embarrassed smile even to the Mahatma's sad, suffering face.

There had been a growing divergence of opinion between the Sardar and Gandhiji on matters of policy. As early as the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact it had led Gandhiji to decide to camp in a school-building at Borsad in spite of the Sardar's pressing request to come and stay with him in his Ashram at Bardoli, Gandhiji felt that his presence would be 'a dead weight on the Sardar'. After India attained independence,

the divergence increased, thanks to their different milieus. The Sardar was now a part of the establishment which had its own dynamics. The role of Gandhiji, on the other hand, was that of a mentor and monitor. No one was aware of the basic difference this made in their outlook more than the Sardar himself. 'You must choose between my way and Bapu's', was a frequent expression on his lips in the period following Independence—particularly in the days preceding Gandhiji's last fast at Delhi. Gandhiji knew this. But he could not tolerate people making capital out of his fast to run down the Sardar. He wanted everybody to know that there was hardly anybody with greater personal affection and regard for him than the Sardar.

A vicious whisper had been doing the rounds of the capital that Gandhiji's fast was intended to bring about a change of heart in the Sardar and constituted a censure on the policies of the Home Ministry. Gandhiji had listened to this propaganda against the Sardar with suppressed pain. The fast relieved Gandhiji from his self-imposed restraint somewhat. Sycophancy or praise of himself at the expense of a colleague, especially of one who differed from him, he could never tolerate. Unequivocally he told the revilers that they were as wrong in isolating the Sardar and making a scapegoat of him as in showering gratuitous praise on himself and Pandit Nehru. Neither of them had need for such praise. 'I know the Sardar. He has a sharp tongue and a bluntness of speech which sometimes unintentionally hurts, but those who know him soon learn to like him all the better for it', he told some newsmen. The Sardar's method and manner of approach to the Hindu-Muslim question was different from Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru's, but it was nonsense to describe him as 'anti-Muslim'. His heart was large enough to accommodate everybody.

True, Gandhiji admitted freely that at one time the Sardar was regarded as his 'yes-man'. He was no longer so; he was 'too masterful' to be anybody's 'yes-man'.

Even when he had permitted himself to be called my 'yes-man' he was so named because whatever I said instinctively appealed to him. Great as he was in his own field and a very able administrator, he was humble enough to begin his political education under me because, as he explained to me, he could not take to the kind of politics that was in vogue at that time when I began my public career in India. *When power descended upon him, he saw that he could no longer successfully apply the method of*

non-violence, which he used to wield with signal success. I (on my part) have made the discovery that, what I and the people with me had termed non-violence, was not the genuine article but a weak copy, known as passive resistance. Naturally, passive resistance can be of no avail to a ruler. Imagine a weak ruler being able to represent any people. He would only degrade his masters who, for the time being, had placed themselves under his trust. I know that the Sardar could never betray or degrade his trust.

Gandhiji went on to say:

I wonder if with a knowledge of this background to my statement anybody would dare call my fast a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. If there is any such person, I can only tell him that he would degrade and hurt himself. . . . My fast, as I have stated in plain language, is undoubtedly on behalf of the Muslim minority in the Union, and therefore it is necessarily against the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Union and the Muslims of Pakistan. It is also on behalf of the minorities in Pakistan as of the Muslim minority in the Union.

The Sardar was reported to have said that Muslim Leaguers could not become friends overnight. This was picked up by his critics as proof of his anti-Muslim bias. Making a pointed reference to this, Gandhiji observed that most Hindus held that view. It was for the Muslim League friends to 'live down the Sardar's remark and by their conduct and not [mere] declarations, disprove it'. One had only to see the Sardar in the company of his 'Imam Bhai' Imam Saheb Bawazir, Gandhiji's South African comrade, and Abbas Tyabji, to realize that in him there was no tinge of antipathy towards the Muslims as such. He regarded both of them literally as his blood-brothers and the members of their families as if they were his own. After the establishment of the Interim Government his most favourite officer was Qurban Ali, the Muslim Inspector-General of Special Police. Needless to say, the liking and admiration was mutual and, on the Sardar's part, continued even when after Partition that officer opted for Pakistan.

The Sardar was too concerned with solving the internal problems that faced India to wish to pick a quarrel with Pakistan, but he wanted peace with justice, never through 'appeasement'. And when it became possible to conclude a pact with Pakistan on fair terms he threw his entire weight in its favour. I shall ever remember the glow of satisfaction on his face when, after the conclusion of the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact, he specially sent for

me, knowing how worried I was about it, and told me, 'So we have done it!' He was most anxious to work the Pact for all it was worth and for that purpose rushed to Calcutta in spite of his failing health. He afterwards told me how deeply disappointed he felt that it could not be followed up with the quick, energetic and sustained action he would have liked. 'It took us three months to name a Minorities Minister', he ruefully complained.

The Sardar could forgive, and his capacity to forgive personal injuries was unbelievable. I could give instances but must not; they are too sacred. Gandhiji also forgave, but Gandhiji would forget too, and that sometimes led people to think that he could be cozened and encouraged them to take liberties. The Sardar's forgiveness was all the more amazing because he never forgot and people knew it. That deterred them from playing any of their tricks on him. He represented Gandhiji's realism in politics: his judgement, his capacity for taking lightning-quick decisions and backing them with a rock-like faith and firm action, his organizing capacity, lynx-eyed alertness, and vigilance. The Sardar's passionate love of the villages and their simple folk with their crafts, occupations and way of life, and his hard work and self-discipline were reminiscent of Gandhiji. It is said about De Valera that, on being led to prison, the inveterate smoker that he was, he stopped at the jail gate, pulled out a cigarette and said, 'Let me have my last smoke'. The Sardar, who was also an inveterate smoker at one time, reacted differently under similar circumstance. He used to say jokingly that imprisonment was not in his line of fate. But the contrary happened. After he was sentenced to imprisonment for the first time, like the Irish patriot, he too pulled out a cigarette as he stood before the gate of Sabarmati prison. A friend rallied him, 'Sardar, for your next smoke you will have to obtain the special permission of your Jail Superintendent'. Instantly, he threw down the unlighted cigarette that he had taken out. He never smoked again.

Before he was overwhelmed by the cares of State, it was a familiar sight to see the Sardar reel out day after day and week after week two thousand, three thousand yards of yarn daily, sitting in the office of the Provincial Congress Committee at Ahmedabad. In his ashram at Bardoli he lived simply, like the people around him, and during his first incarceration in 1930 he insisted on renouncing the special privileges allowed to A class

prisoners, in which group he had been placed, and subsisted entirely on the C class fare allowed to rank and file civil disobedience prisoners. In his own way, he represented Gandhiji's renunciation too. He had not only renounced personal riches but, in a sense, family ties also. The Sardar never cared about what happened to his children. He left them entirely to fend for themselves in the world.

To the last the Sardar continued to be a loyal, disciplined soldier, ready to offer unquestioning obedience whenever it should be demanded of him. He would have laid down office without a word if Gandhiji had wanted it and devoted himself unquestioningly to carrying out his behest, even though it might go against his own bent. Gandhiji knew it, but what would have been the Sardar's obedience worth if he ceased to be himself? Gandhiji valued the Sardar's integrity and independence more than obedience to his own behest. He was anxious to see everyone attain his or her full stature. Then alone could all add to the stature of the country—and so he let the Sardar go his way.

Similarly, there were sharp differences in outlook and approach between the Sardar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, but he remained loyal to his colleagues to the last in the way he understood loyalty, and Pandit Nehru knew better the value of the Sardar's loyal support than many of the partisan critics who proclaimed their differences and, in the process, exaggerated them. Under a different political climate these differences might have developed into a grave split or faction, but the non-violence that Gandhiji had introduced in Indian politics made things different. After all the wordy duels and clashes of temperament, these seasoned war veterans, who had their schooling under Gandhiji, unhesitatingly put the country first and themselves last when it came to the scratch, sinking all personal idiosyncracies in their common devotion to the country. The ideological tussle between the Sardar and Pandit Nehru continued even after Gandhiji's death, but the sobering effect of realities yielded a line of action to a more or less common denominator. To the best of my knowledge, there was no swerving even by a hair's breadth on the Sardar's part from the basic loyalty towards his colleagues.

After Gandhiji's death, I once had occasion to go to the

Sardar to obtain redress for some cases of individual wrong to Muslims which Gandhiji had entrusted to me. The Sardar gave me his ready, unstinted support and redress was secured in the case of some, but other cases remained which called for Pandit Nehru's intervention. I addressed a rather strongly-worded note to Panditji on the subject and showed the draft to the Sardar. He said, 'All right, send it'. I then repaired to the room of my sister Sushila, who was then attending on the Sardar as his physician and staying with him. Hardly had I left the Sardar's room when Panditji went in—his face pale, care-worn and tense with the mark of many a sleepless night stamped on it. I could not bear the thought of adding to his strain and asked my assistant to cancel the draft I had prepared. As soon as Panditji had left, the Sardar stepped into my room. 'Have you handed that note to Panditji?' he asked.

'No', I replied.

'Well, then don't. Did you notice his face as he came in? He is so burdened with care, your note might prove to be the proverbial last straw on the camel's back'. I showed him the draft, with the word 'cancelled' written across it in red pencil and he went back satisfied and relieved.

As the burden of administration weighed more and more heavily upon Pandit Nehru, he mellowed a good deal, and with the mellowing his appreciation of the incomparable qualities of the Sardar grew. As for the Sardar, two and a half years later, and three months before he himself passed away, in a memorable speech at the Gandhi Birthday Celebrations at Indore on 2 October 1950, he said, 'Our leader is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Bapu appointed him as his successor in his life-time—and proclaimed him as such. It is the duty of all of Bapu's soldiers to carry out Bapu's behest. Whoever does not accept it from his heart in that spirit will be a sinner before God. I am not a disloyal soldier. I do not have any thought of the place I am occupying. I only know this much, I am still where Bapu left me.'

Not many people perhaps know that one of the last acts of Gandhiji was to help prevent the drifting apart of these two. In the morning of 30 January 1948 I had read out to him a clipping from the *London Times* in which the differences between the outlook of Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had been played

upon in a manner that distressed him. He told me that he would be taking that matter up in his post-prayer address that evening. In his meeting with the Sardar, just before he set out for the fateful evening prayer that was never to be held, he told him that, although he had previously held the view that one of the two—either he or Nehru—should withdraw from the Cabinet, he had since come to the firm conclusion that the presence of both of them there was indispensable. Any breach in their ranks at that stage would be disastrous. He further said he would make that the topic of his post-prayer speech in the evening. Pandit Nehru would be seeing him after the prayer and he would discuss the question with him, too. If necessary, he would postpone his going to Sevagram and not leave Delhi till he had finally laid the spectre of disunity between the two.

To the Sardar, this became Gandhiji's final injunction.

Gandhiji had asked Lord Mountbatten, too, to serve as a golden bridge between the two, and most faithfully did Mountbatten discharge his trust. To tell the story in his own words: 'After I had looked upon the body of Gandhiji I went over to Nehru and beckoned to Patel to join us and said, "Gandhiji's last request to me was to do everything in my power to bring you together and keep you friends." Under the shadow of their common grief they needed no persuasion.' To resume Mountbatten's narrative: 'They nodded their heads and embraced in silence.'

At night they both broadcast from All-India Radio at Mountbatten's request.

There is talk of erecting a monument to the Sardar. The desire is natural. But let us remember that, like Gandhiji, he disliked mere monuments of brick and stone, and when they were proposed in the case of Gandhiji, he opposed them. The only monument that can do him justice would be to close up ranks, forget all personal considerations and realize that solidarity and integrated endeavour in the service of the country of which he was such a shining example.

Thakkar Bapa

‘You are growing younger day by day. Beginning with the Harijans you have progressively become Bapa to the Bhils, to the Assamese tribals, and now to the Santhals. What earthly use can an ocean of philanthropy like you have for the droplet of my blessings? But since little drops make the ocean, as the old adage says, you have my blessings which you can appropriate for what they might be worth’, wrote Gandhiji to Thakkar Bapa in 1941 on the occasion of the latter’s seventy-second birthday. Gandhiji has had many distinguished lieutenants, some of whom became celebrated later in their own right in our national history, but he had only one Bapa—Amritlal V. Thakkar, who served till the last as one of India’s most distinguished octogenarians. He thus rendered obsolete the Psalmist’s allotted ‘three score years and ten’, but he could not complete the century. India needs his like more and more to realize the content of Independence in terms of those for whom the Congress under Gandhiji’s leadership struggled to win it—the lowest and lost. Without it the political independence that we have won must remain an empty mirage.

Thakkar Bapa was pre-eminently the champion of lost causes. Be there fire, flood, famine or cyclone havoc, in Orissa, Assam, Bengal, Bihar or Bombay or a struggle for the emancipation of women, the Harijans or the aborigines anywhere, Thakkar Bapa was sure to be there in the thick of the melee. The causes which he espoused and made his own would fill the normal span of a man’s life many times over. And yet his greed knew no bounds. He went on adding more and more to the stupendous burden which he was already carrying. The only parallel to that suggests itself is, perhaps, that of the late Deenabandhu Charlie Andrews. Bapa outran C. F. Andrews in the race of years, and the causes that he espoused.

To his indefatigable and tireless industry and hard work he

joined erudition, scientific methods and a loving humanitarian heart, a rare combination in one who aspires to dedicate himself to the service of Daridranarayan. Gandhiji spotted these rare qualities in Thakkar Bapa early. He learnt soon to prize his regular, methodical habits, the result of long training and rigorous self-discipline, and strictly regulated life; and the qualities of meticulous exactness and precision which he himself embodied in his person to an eminent degree and which he regarded as essential weapons in the armoury of truth and non-violence. But what Gandhiji prized in Bapa even more was his unassailable integrity, personal purity, and the spirit of utmost renunciation and self-dedication.

The character of weapons selected depends upon the technique of the fight. The revolutionary non-violent technique which Gandhiji had devised and sought to perfect called forth a new set of values and norms of action in national workers, wholly different from what they had been familiar with before. The difference was best illustrated in his plan of the crusade against untouchability following upon the epic fast also known as the Yeravda Pact fast, which he launched from behind prison walls. The issue was no less than complete eradication in law as well as in actual practice of the pernicious system of 'untouchability' that had its roots in centuries of unreasoning prejudice and caste-hardened orthodoxy masquerading as religion. To achieve that goal the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded—a body that was novel, revolutionary, and paradoxical in its theory, constitution, organization and method. Success would depend upon successful kindling and harnessing of the spiritual resources of the people. And who would be worthier to be entrusted with the newly-born Sangh as its Secretary than Thakkar Bapa? Thereafter his relationship with the Sangh and with Gandhiji became like that of a Hindu wife—life-long and indissoluble. Ghanshyamdas Birla was made the President and the two worked as a fine team. Later, when Bapa once wanted to resign from it so as to be free to devote more time to the problems of aboriginal tribes, Gandhiji in his inimitable style wrote to him:

There is no limit to your greed. By all means satisfy it to the top of your bent. Your Secretaryship (of the Harijan Sevak Sangh) surely is no hindrance. You and Ghanshyamdasji have jointly undertaken responsibility

for the Sangh. Now death alone can release you from it. He as well as I need your moral strength and self-dedication. Your Secretaryship symbolizes it. You can give as much of your time as you like to the Adivasis while discharging your duty as Secretary of the Sangh. You do not mean to tell me that you will want to resign even after that latitude? Just for your sake have I detained. . . . Not that a substitute could not be found. But the eradication of the sin of untouchability is today being sanctified as religion. That is not so in the case of Adivasis. It [service to adivasis] must not be at the cost of the Harijans.

And Bapa stuck to the Sangh till the end.

When Gandhiji went to Noakhali in 1946 on his 'do or die' mission of healing and mercy, Thakkar Bapa accompanied him and became a soldier of non-violence in the truest sense of the term. Unarmed and unaided, discarding the protection of the police and the military, he roamed at large over riot-torn villages, infusing courage among the awe-stricken riot victims by the force of his personal example and disseminating the message of goodwill and peace among Hindus and Muslims alike. The local miscreants soon learnt to respect him and the Noakhali officials to make discretion the better part of valour when confronted by his formidable array of facts and figures in a controversy.

Since the abolition of untouchability in law by the Indian Constituent Assembly, the struggle against untouchability to Thakkar Bapa's mind broadened into the wider struggle for the uplift and emancipation of Harijans as well as the so-called aboriginal and backward elements in India. To carry on the good fight he helped to found the All-India Adimjati Sevak Sangh and even sacrificed his cloistered peace by agreeing to go into the Constituent Assembly. 'The struggle must go on', he told me in answer to a question, 'till the goal of an equalitarian, casteless, social order is realized.' He had no illusions that it will come about in his lifetime, but that did not deter him or damp his ardour. For he knew that the prize is in the process. He sought no other consolation than to be able to alleviate the anguish of the sorrowing and suffering, which is its own reward.

At four score years Thakkar Bapa was going strong. Failing eyesight had failed to impair his tempo. Every night before he retired to bed he would dictate his daily diary and had the accounts of the institutions with which he was connected read out to him. He was always alert and anxious to render full

account to his taskmaster under whose eyes and in whose cause he ceaselessly laboured and toiled.

Thakkar Bapa was an engineer by training and he once took my sister Sushila in a jeep and showed her the road that he had built in the Himalayas, when she had gone to visit Ashok Ashram at Kalsi. He passed away in harness in 1950, a couple of years after Bapu had left us, to join the growing illustrious company at the other end. For some time past he had been laid up with serious heart trouble but refused to get completely out of harness. When Sushila saw him a couple of days before the end, he was having the recent publication of Sardar Patel's speeches read out to him at Bhavnagar. His illness was even then far advanced and there seemed little hope of recovery. A friend tried to persuade Bapa to take things easy. 'Bapa, you should now take a holiday from all worries and responsibilities. You have fully earned the right', he pleaded. 'I have no worry or anxiety burdening my mind' replied the redoubtable Bapa. 'Only the condition of the Mushers [a backward tribe] of Bihar keeps haunting my mind. It is so miserable; it has only to be seen to be believed.' He did not rest till four weeks later he found a couple of workers to take charge of the work among them.

The cry of distress from whatever quarter it came touched Thakkar Bapa deeply. The Assam earthquake and flood havoc shook him to his depths, and even from his sick-bed he made frantic efforts to expedite the sending of his workers to the affected area. As Gandhiji pointed out in his short message on Bapa's seventieth birthday: 'Bapa was born only to serve the downtrodden.' Whether they were Harijans, Bhils, Santhals or Khasis, they could equally claim him as their Bapa—father. Later, when Gandhiji wanted to find a secretary for the Kasturba Trust, he could find no more suitable person—a man or woman—than Thakkar Bapa. Gandhiji himself was the Chairman of the Trust. Together they laid sound foundations for the work of the Trust in the service of women and children in the villages of India.

One of the last public statements which Thakkar Bapa issued from his sick-bed was in relation to our pledge to the Harijans. In that statement he reminded us that under the new constitution special representation and safeguards for the scheduled castes had

been provided for a period of ten years ending with 1960. Within this period we had to create conditions which would render unnecessary the need for special representation and safeguards for Harijans so that they do not have to ask for their continuation at the end of the term. It was a question of now or never.

The best way of paying homage to Thakkar Bapa would be to take upon ourselves the concern expressed in that statement. We seem today to be more engrossed in the scramble of the fruits of freedom than in preserving the tree that bears that fruit. But as sure as the morning follows the night, the tree will wither away if the roots are neglected, and the fruit itself will turn into ashes in our mouths like the proverbial Dead Sea fruit. Full measure of justice to outcastes and the downtrodden and unequivocal fulfilment of our national pledges in this behalf are an indispensable condition which must be fulfilled if we do not want to be overtaken by Nemesis that pursues nations who, when they gain power, forget the pledges they made when they were in the wilderness.

2

Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar, Thakkar Bapa, was born in Bhavnagar on 29 November 1869. He was the second son of Vithaldas Thakkar, a highly respected man, though of modest means. Vithaldas worked for a businessman for a meagre Rs 25 or 30 a month, but others in his neighbourhood were poorer still so that his family was not considered poor. Vithaldas was very particular that proper accounts be kept for income and expenditure and that they should balance. His small, two-storeyed house was bought for him by his elder brother for Rs 1,000 or 1,500. The elder brother was well off and had a large bungalow, and it did not look well that one brother should have a large house and the other none.

Vithaldas saw to it that his children received the education which it had not been his lot to get. The eldest son became a school teacher after passing the Matriculation so that he could supplement the family income. But Vithaldas sent Amritlal to college at Poona and he became an engineer. Amritlal had stood first in the Matriculation examination in 1886 at the age of

sixteen and won a scholarship of Rs 10 a month, which was of some help to the family, though not enough. Vithaldas had to borrow money and mortgage his wife's ornaments to find the money for Amritlal's fees and other college expenses.

Thakkar Bapa never forgot this and was ever grateful to his father and mother for their sacrifices in educating him. In 1890 he passed his engineering examination after the three-year course of studies. He never liked drawing but had to put up with it as it was a necessary part of his engineering training. He had to find a job without delay to pay off his father's debts and help the family. Thakkar Bapa got an overseer's job at Sholapur where a light railway-line was being laid, for Rs 75 a month. His work was so good that within six months he was appointed assistant engineer on the B. G. J. (Bhavnagar, Gondal, Junagadh) Railway at Rs 150 a month.

Thakkar Bapa's reputation gradually spread all over Kathiawad. He was an honest man: farmers used to bribe the engineers to spare their land from acquisition, but when they brought their offerings to Amritlal, he told them that he would spare their land only if the railway line did not need it. This was a new experience for the farmers, and did not suit others in the department. Amritlal resigned before long because of interference in his work by an officer who was not an engineer.

Amritlal was immediately offered a job by Wadhwan State as its Chief Engineer. As his brother was working as a teacher at Wadhvan, Amritlal accepted the job and the two brothers lived together for two or three years. At Wadhwan a contractor tried to get his defective work passed by offering a bribe to Amritlal. Amritlal threw him out of his office. The contractor complained to the Raja Saheb, but the Raja Saheb knew of Amritlal's integrity and did not listen to the contractor. Amritlal completed his assignment in Wadhwan and then moved to Porbandar as its Chief Engineer on a salary of Rs 200 a month. He worked there from 1895 to 1900.

There was a severe famine in Kathiawad at this time. Amritlal's father had given up his job and was concentrating on organizing and running a hostel for Lohana children to promote education in his own community. He did not receive any salary for this, and money for the construction of the hostel and for food, clothing and books to the students came from donations.

Vithaldas threw himself fully into relief work during the famine; people trusted him and he handled large funds even though he was himself poor. He wrote about the famine to Amritlal, who tried to help the famine-stricken by giving them work.

A sad incident at this time made a deep impression on Amritlal's mind. Among the workers was an emaciated couple who died leaving behind two boys and a two-month-old baby. The boys of twelve and thirteen could not look after a two-month-old baby and buried the infant alive! This shocked Amritlal and made him appreciate the plight of the poor. Thakkar Bapa's mind started turning more and more towards the service of the poor. His father's example was an inspiration. The father served his own community, but Thakkar Bapa's service was to extend to all communities, especially the poor and the down-trodden, the oppressed and the exploited, Harijans, Adivasis and women. He called his father his first guru, from whom he learnt the lesson of selfless service, meticulous account-keeping, economy, simplicity and hard work.

Just about the time he was finishing his work at Porbandar and getting ready to move on, Thakkar Bapa saw an advertisement inviting applications to work on a railway line to be built in Uganda. Amritlal applied for the job and was selected on a salary of Rs 300 a month.

Amritlal was married at the age of sixteen, as was the custom in those days. But his married life started only after he completed his studies and had become an engineer. A son was born to them in 1892, but he did not live for more than six or seven years. The boy's death was a big blow to Thakkar Bapa, and even more so to his wife. Her health deteriorated. When Amritlal accepted the job in Uganda his father reluctantly consented to his going, for no one could think of Amritlal's wife accompanying him and he, therefore, went without her.

On his return from Uganda Thakkar Bapa got a job in Sangli State where his friend Dr Krishna Deva was working as the doctor-in-charge of the hospital. The three years at Sangli were a happy period for Amritlal and his wife—they would go for walks in the evening and sit by the river, talking. But when a British officer started poking his nose into Amritlal's work, he resigned his job. He was then employed by the Bombay

Municipality. Amritlal was to supervise the railway line which took away the garbage of the city. The work was unpleasant and Amritlal was surprised that Kathiawadis were doing it by the hundreds. They had come to Bombay during the famine and stayed on.

In Bombay Amritlal met Vithal Ramji Shinde who was devoted to the service of the untouchables and ran several schools for their children. One of these was for the children of Kathiawadi municipal workers. Thakkar Bapa watched Shinde's way of working and was much impressed. He called Shinde his second guru. The municipal job made Amritlal interested in the problems of the sweeper class. He wanted to give up his job and devote himself to their service. But when he asked for his father's permission to do so, the old man advised him to wait and continue in service during his lifetime.

Amritlal's wife's health remained poor and she passed away in 1909. He was persuaded to marry a second time. But the marriage was not a success, and, when his second wife died after a year or two, Bapa decided not to marry again. Amritlal's father died in 1913, and he felt free thereafter to give up his job. He joined Gokhale's Servants of India Society on 6 February 1914.

Bapa remained faithful to the high ideals of the society till the very end. Later, when he came into contact with Gandhiji and when the Harijan Sevak Sangh was set up, Gandhiji chose the industrialist G. D. Birla as its President and Thakkar Bapa as Secretary. Thakkar Bapa organized its work with meticulous care and rare dedication. His experience with the Bombay municipal workers had already interested him in the problems of the untouchables, and his association with Vithal Ramji Shinde and Gopal Krishna Devadhar had initiated him into the service of the downtrodden. He now went headlong into the movement for the removal of untouchability, the education of Harijans and their economic uplift. He travelled all over India, found and trained workers and posted them in key positions and organized the work in a systematic manner. In the course of it he came across the tribals and resolved to alleviate their poverty, ignorance and backwardness. He thus organized the Adimjati Sevak Sangh.

When the Kasturba Trust was registered early in 1945 with the objective of helping women and children in the smaller

villages of India, Thakkar Bapa was asked to take up the responsibility of organizing the work. He was made Secretary of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, of which Gandhiji was Chairman. An excellent organizer and a hard taskmaster that he was, Thakkar Bapa laid sound foundations for the Trust's work under Gandhiji's leadership. Bapa was unanimously elected Chairman of the Trust shortly before his death. He was too ill to attend the meetings and asked to step down from the chairmanship, but his request was not accepted—such was the regard he was held in.

In 1946, when Bapu went to Noakhali, Bapa accompanied him and, as usual, did a very good job. Be it famine, an earthquake, a riot or floods or any other disaster, Bapa was always there to serve those in distress. Till the end he travelled third class and went about in buses. I have seen him waiting for a bus in Bombay in his ripe old age. He was often hard on those who worked with him, but he was hardest on himself.

Thakkar Bapa was a member of the Constituent Assembly and travelled far and wide to study the conditions of Adivasis so that he could back with facts and figures his demand to introduce the necessary safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution of India.

Thakkar Bapa's eighty-first birthday was celebrated in 1950 with great enthusiasm in many places in India. In Delhi Sardar Patel presided over a function which was addressed by several leaders including Maulana Azad and G. V. Mavalankar. Glowing tributes were paid to Bapa's selfless service to all those in sorrow and suffering.

Bapa's health was failing and he had to retire to Bhavnagar in 1948, where his doctor brother looked after him. Specialists from Bombay often came, and I, too, visited him at Bhavnagar. Despite poor health and needing rest, he attended to his extensive mail and wrote many letters to his workers in different places. He continued to take a lively interest in what was happening in the country, and especially in the activities that he had been connected with.

I saw Bapa on 16 and 17 January 1951. A diuretic injection helped him to sleep better. Manu Gandhi came and I thought she could nurse Bapa. But Bapa did not agree to this. On Wednesday the 17th he asked what day of the week it was. Then

he said that Sardar Patel had died on a Friday, and so had Bapu; Friday might be the day for his own departure too. And he did pass away on a Friday, 19 January 1951, peacefully, about 8.30 p.m. He was conscious till the end and asked to be placed on the floor as his time for departure had come.

SUSHILA NAYAR

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

An outstanding characteristic of India's non-violent struggle for freedom was the reversal of some of the values and rules which obtain in national struggles of the usual type. For instance, in an armed struggle it is largely the men who fight. Women mostly mourn over the dead and minister to the sick and the wounded as angels of mercy. In our case, women played an equal if not greater part in the struggle. In the vanguard of the women fighters for freedom thrown up by the Indian freedom movement, was Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

It was Gokhale who brought her to Gandhiji. He was a close friend of her family and, during one of his visits to them, he spoke of Gandhiji as the man who, when he returned from South Africa, 'would revolutionize the country', and expressed the hope that Amrit Kaur would then meet him. His words sank into Rajkumari's mind. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Bombay in 1915. There she was presented to Gandhiji. His quiet strength, burning earnestness and utter humility gripped her. In 1934, after a prolonged, obstinate struggle with her own innate rebelliousness that followed the initial impact, she took the plunge and joined him in his Ashram at Wardha. She never looked back.

She had a strange schooling under Gandhiji as a preparation for her political work. It consisted largely of the cultivation of the right values and right attitudes that constitute the core of non-violence—humility, meekness, the simple life, the practice of voluntary poverty, tolerance, equal respect for all religions and, finally, a cosmopolitan outlook in which there is no room for prejudices based on race, colour or station in life. A wilful child, born and brought up in princely surroundings, accustomed to having her way with her fond father and indulgent brothers, Rajkumari, with her sophisticated Oxford education, had to learn and unlearn a lot.

One of the revolutionary changes wrought by Gandhiji in our national life was to bring down politics from its Himalayan heights to the dusty plains where the common folk dwell. Politics had come to be regarded as a high mystery, almost an esoteric lore, which only the privileged few could understand. He stripped it of its mystery and brought it within the ken and comprehension of the man in the street by reducing it to the terms of his day-to-day life. To fit Rajkumari for the role that he envisaged for her, he set her to develop her Hindustani and even to compile an English-Hindustani dictionary. He held that the yawning gulf between the classes and the masses—the leaders and those who were to be led—would remain unless the leaders talked in the common man's language. The intelligentsia would never be able to enter into the hearts and minds of the masses so long as their thinking and speech continued to be in an alien tongue.

Rajkumari also became an expert spinner. Spinning was to bring her in living touch with the toiling millions and serve as a bridge between them and the class from which she came. She had to learn the art of scavenging, and, when she suffered from any ailment, Gandhiji gave her the benefit of Nature Cure, such as the poor in an Indian village can afford. This provided her an insight into the problems of the prevention and cure of diseases in a community of labouring people away from the cities. Her experience in the Ashram community kitchen initiated her into the problems of nutrition and of providing an adequate, healthy and balanced diet for India's undernourished, destitute millions at minimum cost. These were the problems that later, as Minister for Health in independent India, she had to grapple with. The working out of these simple problems was, in Gandhiji's eyes, nation-building from bottom upwards and therefore the quintessence of politics in the true sense. Correlated with non-violence and independence, it became an integral part of India's freedom struggle.

Even before joining the freedom struggle, Rajkumari was already in the vanguard of the women's movement in India as well as abroad. All her brothers were high government officials. She became a liaison between Gandhiji and governmental circles, as also with numerous Europeans with whom she and her family had close contacts, and with the Christian community.

Many a high British official, who would normally have kept away from Gandhiji and would have resisted to the utmost his influence if he came near him, was thus imperceptibly brought into Gandhiji's fold through Rajkumari.

Gandhiji had often declared that, if he was to be born again, he would like to be born a Harijan or a woman—in his eyes the two most oppressed sections of humanity for whose deliverance he deemed no sacrifice too great to make. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur saw that burning passion and realized that a greater champion than he of women's causes would never be found. She felt irresistibly drawn to him when she found that the non-violent struggle which he had launched offered to women an opportunity equal to, if not greater than, men in playing their part in the country's liberation. Amrit Kaur took the plunge and gave up her princely household to become a nationalist and a commoner. So did many other women. Today, anyone can see how, without any special effort on their part, Indian women have attained their full political rights, which women in other countries obtained only after years of obstinate struggle.

During the Quit India struggle, Amrit Kaur was among those honoured with arrest and imprisonment. Kept in solitary confinement for over eight weeks amidst unhygienic and filthy surroundings and made to subsist on food prescribed for ordinary criminals and badly cooked too, she was taken out of prison and put under house arrest for twenty months after she had lost nearly seven kilograms in weight, which her frail body could hardly afford. It speaks volumes for her purity of motives and the universal respect which she inspired that one English official thought nothing of losing his job as the price of lodging a protest against her arrest and ill-treatment in jail. This was Mr Penderal Moon, I.C.S. Scandalized, in a letter to Amrit Kaur's brother Colonel Shamsheer Singh, I.M.S., he freely expressed himself about the way the British Government had acted. His letter was intercepted by the military intelligence and he was made to pay the penalty by an irate White bureaucracy that brooked no dissent, even in private correspondence, by its officials in respect of the arbitrary measures adopted for the suppression of India's Quit India mass upheaval. This was rather extraordinary. As a talented columnist at that time observed, if what a celebrated Indian Viceroy and his chief, the Secretary of

State, wrote about each other in their personal letters had leaked out, it would have resulted in each demanding the immediate dismissal of the other!

It was my privilege to have known and worked with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for over thirty years. Ever since she came to Gandhiji in 1934, she was like a loving sister. A more highly prized colleague I have yet to find. Among her unique gifts were her marvellously quick grasp, her efficiency and her industry, coupled with a rare refinement and culture. Her father had lost the Gaddi of Kapurthala, a princely state, because he had become a Christian. Amrit Kaur was born a Christian. A devout Christian, she held in equal respect religions other than her own, and she had the integrity and the courage to speak out, without mental reservation, when she found her co-religionists doing things which she felt were un-Christian, and of which her conscience did not approve. She was born and raised in luxury and yet accepted with the utmost grace a life of simplicity, self-denial and gruelling work. In Sevagram Ashram she lived like the rest of us, sleeping on the ground under the stars, and eating the plainest food cooked in the community kitchen.

Amrit Kaur's association with Gandhiji's secretarial work and the editorial work relating to *Harijan* provided the finishing touches to her political training. Once Gandhiji sent her on a delicate mission to Lord Pethick-Lawrence at the time of the Cabinet Mission's visit in 1946. The brief with which she was sent throws interesting light on the nature of the assignment and the qualities that its execution called for:

Tell him [Lord Pethick-Lawrence] he [Gandhiji] has surpassed himself in trusting against himself the Mission's word and looking at the bright side whenever it was not dark on the face of it. He put before the packed prayer audience the brightest side and asked them to trust till trust would be folly if not crime. . . . The Viceroy [Lord Wavell] could not be allowed to act imperiously at the very threshold. Do this only if he [Lord Pethick-Lawrence] opens the subject. If he talks only gossip, you will take a few minutes and come away. *In no case will you talk without mastery of what you may talk* [italics mine]. You can also say that they must hasten not slowly but quickly if they want to avoid the railway strike which evidently a truly national government can avoid if anybody at all can.

At the time of Lord Wavell's Simla Conference for the formation of a Provisional National Government, and again at the time of the formation of the Interim Government at the Centre

by Pandit Nehru under the Cabinet Mission's plan, Amrit Kaur's name was proposed by the Congress for membership of the Cabinet, only to be turned down by the Viceroy. It was only after Independence that she entered the Government as Minister for Health. She never lost the common touch after entering the cabinet, where she did a very good job as Minister of Health for ten years. It is difficult to say which was the more important of the two roles—that of a Minister in the Indian Union Government or that of the silent, unobtrusive, mostly behind-the-scenes tireless worker in India's freedom struggle. I for one would give place of honour to the latter.

In 1957 Rajkumari became a member of the Rajya Sabha and, though she ceased to be Minister of Health, she continued to take a keen interest in the problems of health and made valuable contributions as President of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Chairman of the Indian Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Corps, and President of the Tuberculosis Association of India. Till the end she worked hard and passed away in harness following a heart attack in 1964, a few months before Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru left us.

I could not understand some of the things she did as a Rajya Sabha member, as for instance her stand on the Salt Tax; but the ties that united us remained stronger than ever. I felt as forlorn at her death as did her brother Colonel Shamsheer Singh, Shummie as he was to us. He was devoted to his sister. The unique mutual devotion between brother and sister was an inspiration which I shall ever treasure.

1964

C.F.A. The Man

It was by his vigorous championship of the victims of the Lahore Martial Law regime that I first came to know of him. I was then a student going up for my Bachelor of Arts degree from Government College, Lahore, and though members of our college escaped the worst indignities of the Frank Johnson regime, what one saw around one was enough to choke the soul of any patriotic and self-respecting young man. What disappointed us most, and particularly me, was the supine attitude of some of the religious leaders whom we had been taught to look up to and the inglorious way in which they buckled before the irate commandant's *demarche* for the rustication of a certain percentage of students in some colleges. The percentage was arbitrarily fixed and the required quota had to be rusticated, guilt or no guilt. 'What sort of God-fearingness is that,' we asked ourselves, 'which does not even enable one to cast out fear and stand up for right and justice against oppression?' Instead of sympathy, we got from 'wise heads' counsels of prudence only. We were shunned and avoided as hotheads responsible for the country's troubles. Those were dark days indeed, and despair clutched at the heart of aspiring youth.

It was then that Charlie Andrews' voice was heard—clear, ringing, strident, espousing the students' cause and giving expression to their outraged feelings. He personally came to Lahore to do his bit for them and his residence became the Mecca of all rusticated students. It was usual in those days to compare the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy with the Massacre of Glencoe. But that did not satisfy Charlie Andrews' historical sense. 'No. It is worse even than that', he said, 'considering the distance that humanity has travelled since that remote Highland tragedy.' It was a portent. For an Englishman who loved his country it was too much to sit still over his country's misdeeds.

That gave one the key to his entire personality. Charlie

Andrews was, above all, a humanitarian, a servant of God, who had made the whole world his family, and who recognized no frontiers of colour, caste or creed. None deserved better the title *Deenabandhu*, which grateful India affectionately gave him in recognition of his ceaseless labour of love in the cause of the poor. The cry of the distressed never found him unready. Ill-health never deterred him. He was ready at a moment's notice to proceed to the end of the earth in response to the cry of humanity, whether it was from China or British Guinea, South Africa, Trinidad or Fiji. In fact, the more forlorn a cause the greater was his sympathy for it. Like his master Jesus Christ, he never hesitated to pitch himself against principalities and powers to champion the cause of the weak and the oppressed. In fact, he considered that to be the core of Jesus' teaching, and identified Christ's Kingdom of Heaven with the realization of his utopia of social justice upon earth.

C.F.A.'s Christianity was as wide as his humanity, and the scriptures of other faiths were to him not less dear than those of his own. It was a favourite saying of his that, but for his Indian and non-Christian contacts, his own understanding of Christ would have remained incomplete. He literally followed Christ's saying, 'Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes nor staff', sometimes with romantic results. Once, as Gandhiji's cashier, I entrusted him with a ten-rupee note to pay off his tongawalla. Gandhiji was then convalescing after his appendicitis operation in Sassoon Hospital, Poona. In the evening Charlie Andrews returned and innocently told me to pay off the tongawalla as the ten-rupee note had 'slipped out' of his 'open pocket'. I shall never forget the trouncing which I got from Gandhiji when I reported the matter to him. 'Could you not foresee', he thundered, 'he would give it away to the next beggar, if he did not lose it; you might as well entrust a baby with a gold ring'.

Miss Agatha Harrison, Charlie Andrews' gift to Gandhiji and India, who acted sometimes as his secretary, used to tell us: 'The first thing I do when he returns from India is to empty his pockets, lest important messages from friends across the seas should go to the laundry instead of their proper destination. Charlie is a baby and needs to be mothered.' With all his depth

and seriousness, his unmatched erudition and wide experience, he had the heart and innocence of a child of seven and was

‘As the greatest only are
In his simplicity sublime.’

Yet with all the real seriousness side of his nature, Deenabandhu was not devoid of humour. I shall never forget how, during the second Round Table Conference when we stayed together at 88 Knightsbridge in London, he once set the whole company of us roaring with laughter as he recited with inimitable mimicry his parody of the poem ‘Hunting of the Snark’, substituting ‘thirty-two boxes’ in the original with ‘thirty-two venerable Bishops’, Gandhiji having just had a meeting with the Bishops at Lambeth Palace that day: ‘Thirty-two Bishops all carefully packed, his name well written on each’. The adventure in the improvisation, however, proved to be still-born, because, as often happened in C.F.A.’s own case, the keys of the boxes were all left behind.

One of the last meetings that I had with C.F.A. was in Gandhiji’s company as he lay on his sickbed in Presidency Hospital, Calcutta. Again and again in the course of his talk he reverted to the ‘inner universe’, in which he had, during his illness, found ineffable peace. ‘As the outer senses become attenuated, this inner universe unfolds itself to you. Although it is invisible, it is real, and embraces man’s entire existence. Just now, when the whole world seems to be rushing headlong to its doom, the need has become all the greater to renovate our soul by the rediscovery of, and plunge into, this inner universe’, he remarked to Gandhiji. As the time to leave drew near, C.F.A. grew more and more restless and several times anxiously inquired whether his ward-sweeper had returned. We could not at first understand the reason for his anxiety, till I suddenly remembered how, during Gandhiji’s twenty-one-day fast for Hindu-Muslim unity at Delhi, he had brought to Gandhiji by special appointment the sweeper of ‘Dilkusha’ (the name of Rai Bahadur Sultan Singh’s bungalow on the Ridge, where Gandhiji was staying). He afterwards recorded in his poetical style in *Young India* the ineffable joy of the poor man at the *darshan*, which the curious can still read with benefit. It was so characteristic of Deenabandu.

even *in extremis*, to be thinking of the 'poor, the lowliest and lost'.

Deenabandhu made a complete recovery from his illness in 1940, but he had to be admitted again to hospital for an operation in 1941, when he suffered a mild paralytic stroke following the preliminary operation. His numerous friends in India and abroad were greatly relieved to learn that he was considered by his doctors to be out of any immediate danger by the time Gandhiji visited him again on his return from Malikanda. We found him still very weak, but otherwise there was a marked all-round improvement. The effect of the mild paralytic stroke was nearly over, the kidney function had largely been restored, and Gandhiji had the satisfaction of being told that, if and when the second operation was decided upon, the most competent surgeon in Calcutta would be invited to perform it.

Deenabandhu was apparently feeling quite at home in his well-ventilated, cheerful room. He was eager to know all about Gandhiji's Santiniketan visit and his meeting with Tagore. The reference to the poet put him in an expansive mood. Everything that Gandhiji told him was 'wonderful', 'marvellous', 'perfect'. He referred to the European struggle which had been exercising his mind even on his sickbed, and then added, as if describing something that he saw with the eye of faith, 'But Bapu, Swaraj is coming, I see it coming. India will be free'.

'I know it', replied Gandhiji.

'Do you know' resumed Deenabandhu, 'I am quite reconciled to my illness? I think it was God's blessing in disguise. It has given me a wonderful experience which I would never otherwise have had.' He struggled hard to recall Francis Thompson's lines without success. I asked him if he was thinking of Francis Thompson's 'In no strange land'.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.

His countenance lit up, and he began slowly to mumble out the succeeding lines:

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—

That we ask of the stars in motion
 If they have rumour of Thee there?
 Not where the wheeling systems darken,
 And our benumbed conceiving soars—
 The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
 Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

He again fell into musing. 'O, it is marvellous, that description of the sweep of the angels' wings', he slowly muttered, his eyes half-closed and a deep introspective look on his face. I supplied the lines:

The angels keep their ancient places:
 Turn but a stone, and start a wing,
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.
 But (when so said thou canst not sadder)
 Cry;—and upon they so sore loss
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
 Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

A strange peace settled on his face as I proceeded:

Yes, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
 Cry, clinging Heaven by the hems;
 And lo, Christ walking on the water,
 Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

I chafed him, as I rose to leave, 'And who wrote, "Borodada"?'

But have seen His face—have seen and known
 This sacrament was given
 And I can wait the dawning of the day,
 The day-star on my night already gleaming,
 The shadow and the veil shall pass away,
 Death shall make true my dreaming.

He replied with a faint smile, 'I think I wrote something like that!'

The Two Gandhis

‘A king among men by stature and dignity of bearing, practising ahimsa . . . and implicitly taking his instructions from Mahatma Gandhi’, was the description that C. F. Andrews once gave of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He is popularly called Badshah Khan, the King of the Khans (as the Pathans are called) out of love and admiration for his services to his people. He is also known as the Frontier Gandhi because he led his people on the path of non-violence shown by Gandhiji. A deeply religious man, he has tried to put Gandhiji’s philosophy into practice in his own and in the lives of his fellow Pathans.

Simple and straight as a die, he shuns the tortuous ways of diplomacy. In 1931, after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhiji took him to Sir Ralph Griffith. Badshah Khan was unwilling. He was a plain, simple man, he said. He did not understand diplomacy. On meeting Sir Ralph, Badshah Khan told him: ‘I am a plain man. I like a straight talk. Do not try to be diplomatic with me.’ The latter replied, ‘Khan Saheb, politics is a game of chess with its moves and counter-moves. I checkmate you. You checkmate me.’ ‘Then, I am not the man for you,’ Badshah Khan replied, and rose to go. Sir Ralph Griffith tactfully changed his tone and the interview proceeded. Years afterwards, Badshah Khan narrated the sequel. ‘I placed before him my plan of going among the tribesmen and winning their hearts by loving service. On my return to my province after the interview, he put me into prison.’

For over a decade and a half Badshah Khan had fought against the British but at the end of it he harboured no ill-will or bitterness in his heart. ‘The British have put me in prison, but I do not hate them’, he told Robert Berneys who interviewed him during the truce in 1931. ‘My movement is social as well as political. I teach the “Red Shirts” to love their neighbours and speak the truth. Pathans are a warlike race; they do not take

easily to the gospel of non-violence. I am doing my best to teach it to them.' That night the author of *The Naked Fakir* wrote in his diary: 'Looking the embodiment of the traditional painting of Christ, Abdul Ghaffar Khan is a kindly, gentle and rather lovable man.'

To be a Khudai Khidmatgar—servant of God—in the true sense of the word, is the goal of Badshah Khan's striving. In its pursuit he reckons no cost too great. During the Quit India struggle he was brought to Haripur prison with two of his ribs broken and his face and clothes bespattered with blood as a result of beatings by the police. Colonel Smith, a quick-tempered *pucca* saheb who was deeply prejudiced against the Khudai Khidmatgars, had been specially brought to the North-West Frontier Province as Inspector-General of Prisons to deal with them. During one of his visits of inspection, he entered Badshah Khan's yard, where Badshah Khan had reared some poultry. 'The birds used to come and sit on my lap. Sometimes they perched on my head and shoulders. He witnessed all this from behind unobserved. After some time he appeared before me and said: "Good morning, Khan. What is all this?" "Just what you see", I answered, and added, "it has a rich lesson for you [the British] too." He looked puzzled. I explained to him that what he had witnessed was a small illustration of the power of love. "These feathered friends know that they are meant to be eaten, that we shall slaughter them . . . but see, how they respond to a little affection". His remarks put the Colonel in deep thought. 'For a while he stood still and uttered not a word. After that, however, although our movement still continued, he was a changed man.'

On his release, Badshah Khan once went to Garhi Shabqadar for a meeting. There he found the Colonel enjoying a picnic with his wife and child. 'Seeing me from a distance, he came up to me. He also brought his child and insisted on my putting my hand on its head as a blessing. He told me he would never serve under Pakistan. True to his word, immediately after Pakistan was formed he retired from service and returned home.'

Gandhiji was born in a family with a Vaishnava tradition deeply impregnated by Jain influence. This made non-violence or ahimsa natural for him. In the case of the Frontier Gandhi, it was just the opposite. War and violence have been the normal



Mahadev Desai



Harilal Gandhi



Kasturba Ghandhi



Manilal Gandhi



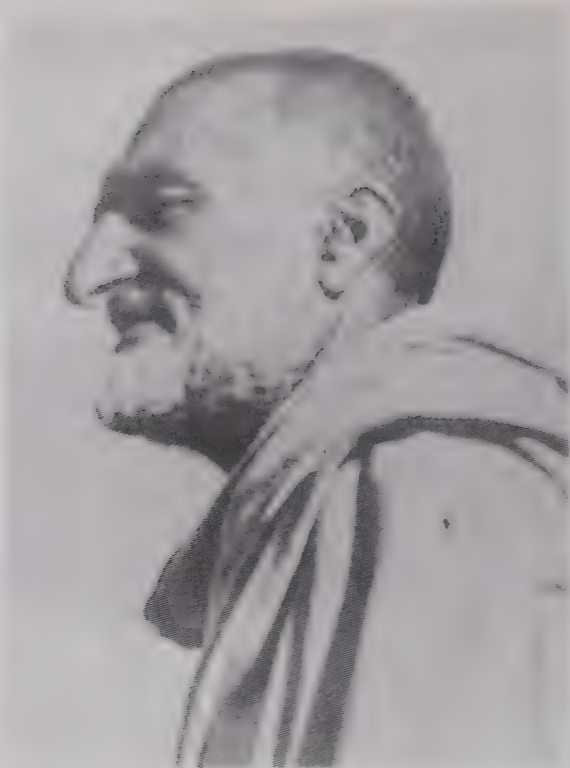
Ramdas Gandhi



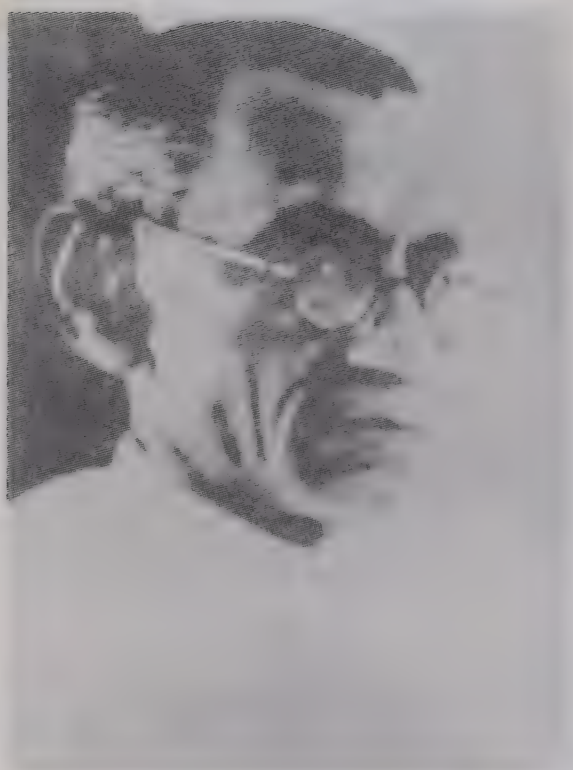
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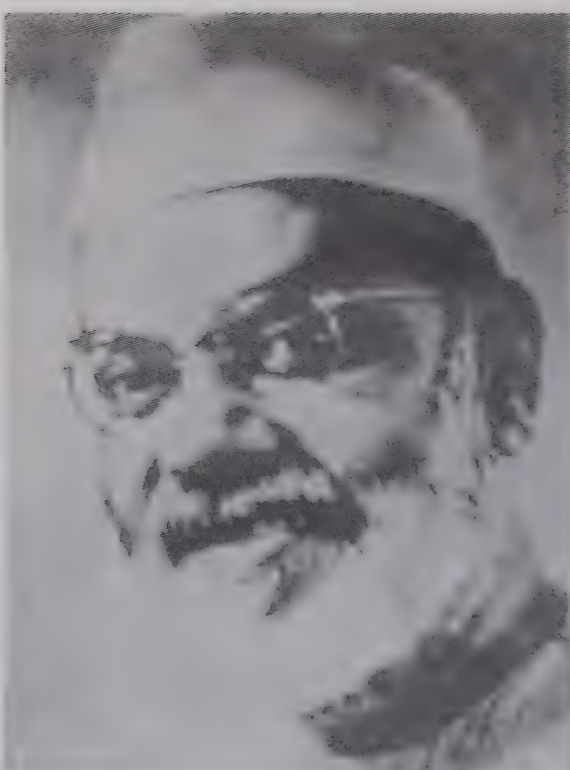
Motilal Nehru



Abdul Ghaffar Khan



Kishorelal Mashruwala



J. C. Kumarappa



Shoorji Vallabhdas



Madan Mohan Malaviya



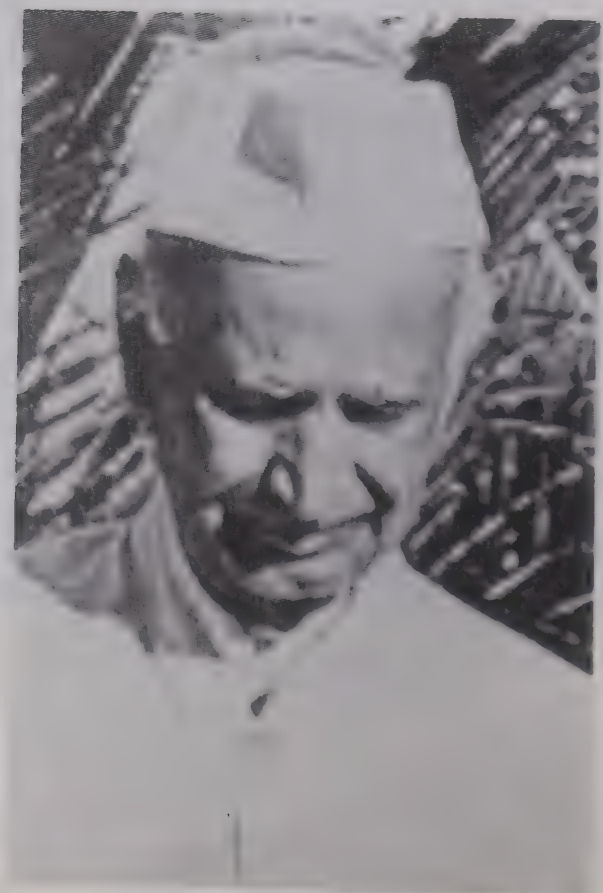
Rajaji



Henry Polak



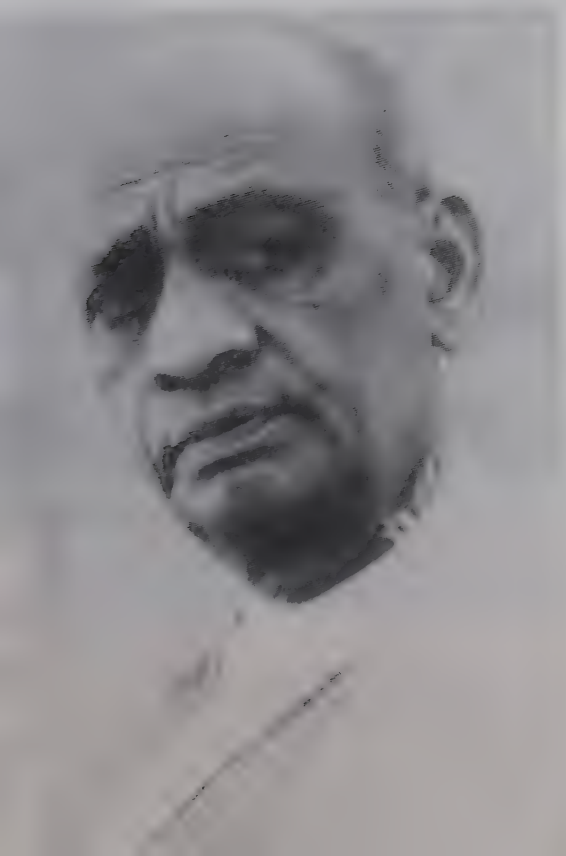
C. F. Andrews



Thakkar Bapa



· Rajkumari Amrit Kaur



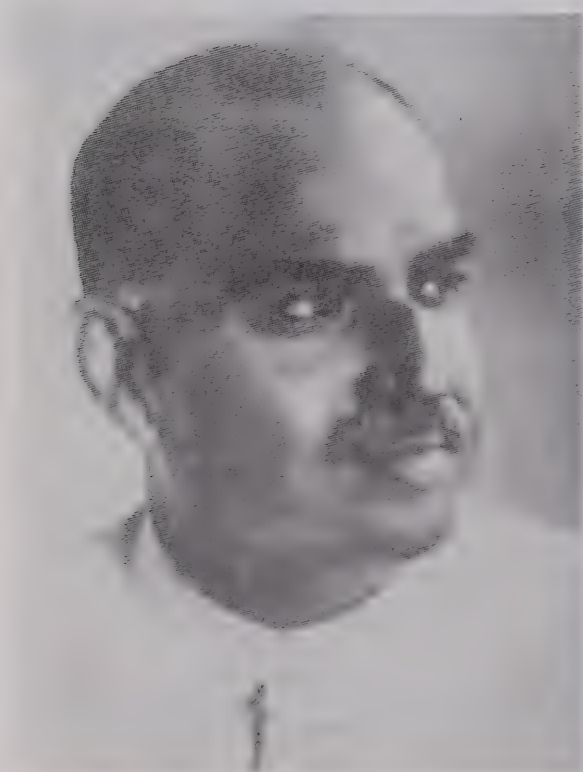
Sardar Patel



Tej Bahadur Sapru



S. Radhakrishnan



Syamaprasad Mookerjee



Jamnalal Bajaj

way of life for the frontier Pathans. The Pathan code of honour gives a very high place to the taking of revenge. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the law of life among these brave, fearless people. The score must be settled if the honour of the family or the tribe is to be vindicated. Blood feuds run through generations, resulting in some of the finest families being brought to the verge of extinction. Brought up in this tradition, it was a revolutionary step for Badshah Khan to commit himself irrevocably to non-violence, and inculcate in his people the ideal of forgiveness as the manlier and nobler way. 'The blood feuds were ruining the Pathans', he once remarked to Gandhiji. 'I could not stand the senseless sacrifice of promising young lives, Mahatmaji, and I decided to wean them from the evil custom.' To Badshah Khan's credit stands the feat of turning his people, who were reputed to be the fiercest warriors in the world, into matchless soldiers of non-violence.

Gandhiji was a frail-looking man of medium height, with ordinary features. It was the expression in his face, his personal magnetism and the light that radiated from his eyes that cast a spell upon people. In the case of Badshah Khan, his impressive physical frame serves to emphasize his moral and spiritual stature. Over six feet tall, fair, with a glowing pink complexion, chiselled features and piercing eyes, he impresses us even more by his kindly mien. He shares with Gandhiji his childlike laughter and love of nature.

Gandhiji's experience of Western civilization brought him a fresh awareness of the best in his own culture, and convinced him that India's simplicity was superior to Western glamour. Badshah Khan did not have to travel by that circuitous path to become a firm believer in the Indian way of life. Both drank deep of their own religion and believed that if people would practise their religion rather than merely talk about it, there would be no room for quarrels in the name of religion.

During our fight for freedom, Badshah Khan discovered that the British were more afraid of non-violent Pathans than of an arms-bearing Pathan. Illustrative of this was a story he narrated to Gandhiji. Once he and his Red Shirts were ordered by a British military officer to disperse, or else, they were warned, they would be fired upon. The young British officer on horseback repeated the warning. Saadullah, Badshah Khan's nephew,

was there. 'Shoot if you dare, we shall not disperse', he told the officer commanding. 'Mahatmaji, you should have seen his countenance', Badshah Khan recalled. 'He was red in the face. He was perspiring.' 'What do you want?' the Englishman asked Saadullah. 'Nothing', Saadullah replied. 'Allow us to depart. Give us way', mumbled the military officer and they passed out unhurt through the vast crowd. There was no firing.

The tragic outbreak of communal frenzy in pre-partition India took Gandhiji to Noakhali and from there to Bihar and Delhi. Badshah Khan was with him in Bihar. Together they tried to wipe the tears from the eyes of the victims of communal frenzy, instil courage into their hearts and quicken the conscience of the majority community, so that both the communities would be able to live together like brothers as before. While Gandhiji was thus occupied, the Congress leaders accepted the partition plan behind his back. The Muslim League demanded a referendum in the North-West Frontier Province as the price of its acceptance of the partition plan for Punjab and Bengal and the British and the Congress accepted it over the heads of, and without reference to, the Khan brothers or their Khudai Khidmatgars. Badshah Khan was very upset. 'We fought and won the general election in 1946 on this very issue. Why should we have another opinion poll?' he asked.

There was another and even weightier reason. The terms of the referendum had been restricted to a choice between India and Pakistan, to the exclusion of an autonomous Pakhtoonistan. Badshah Khan was afraid that in the surcharged atmosphere at that time the issue of India versus Pakistan was sure to be presented by the Muslim League as meaning Hindus versus Muslims and exploited to rouse communal passions. This might result in a revival of blood feuds, from which he had toiled so hard to wean the Pathans. He and his party boycotted the referendum, and the N.W.F.P. was declared to be a part of Pakistan. As Badshah Khan later put it, they were 'thrown to the wolves'.

Badshah Khan and his followers were offered all kinds of temptations by the British Government as well as by Jinnah both before, at the time of, and after partition, if only they would repudiate the Congress, endorse the two-nation theory

and join the Muslim League. They refused to compromise their principles and join hands with the communalists. Perhaps the most tragic consequence of the vivisection of India has been the present plight of Badshah Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars of the North-West Frontier Province.

The emergence of non-violent Pathans was a portent of singular significance in India's struggle for freedom. For near upon three quarters of a century the British had kept up the 'Frontier Bogey' and used it to frighten the Indian liberal politician. It had provided a plausible excuse for the extravagant military expenditure that an impoverished India could ill afford and for the continuation of foreign rule in India's own supposed interests. India's Grand Old Man, Dadabhai Naoroji, had first exposed the myth. Gandhiji exploded it. But Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan transformed the Pathan 'bogeyman' into the spearhead of India's non-violent revolution. Reputed to be crack-shots and the doughtiest of warriors, they set an example during the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 in the non-violence of the brave, which stirred the whole of India to its depths and made the British more afraid of a non-violent Pathan than they had ever been of a violent one.

During 1930 and 1933 the Red Shirts were subjected to the worst type of lawlessness. They were stripped naked; made to run through cordons of British soldiers, who kicked them and jabbed them with rifle ends and bayonets as they ran; they were thrown down from the roofs of houses, ducked in dirty ponds and subjected to indecent tortures which sometimes left them maimed for life. Yet through this period there was not a single case of violence on their part. When they found that they could bear it no longer, some of them committed suicide rather than break the pledge of non-violence that they had given to Badshah Khan, their Chief.

It was in June 1931 that I first met Badshah Khan at Bardoli railway station as he alighted from a third class compartment dressed in a long, flowing khadi dress. A bag containing one change of clothes and a few papers was slung over his shoulder. He carried no bedding, or travelling kit of any other kind. He had come to place himself at Gandhiji's disposal as a soldier of non-violence, he said. In 1936, he was again with Gandhiji at

Wardha. He slept on a palm-leaf mat on the ground, and refused to accept any special amenities for himself even when pressed. Gandhiji had to resort to a little stratagem to induce him to avail of the meat diet that his system badly needed to keep fit. Morning and evening he attended the Ashram community prayers with unfailing regularity and took his full share in the performance of the daily Ashram chores. Offered the Congress Presidentship, he declined the honour saying he had been a common soldier all his life and would like to die one. In 1937, when Congress Ministries were formed in the N.W.F. Province, he again declined to join his elder brother Dr Khan Saheb's Ministry and chose to tread the path of service instead.

In 1938 Badshah Khan took Gandhiji to his province. Together the two Gandhis toured the whole of the North-Western Province to explain to the Khudai Khidmatgars the gospel of non-violence—its inner meaning and the laws that govern it. At the end, when they parted, as Gandhiji put it, 'Our eyes were wet'.

In 1940 when the Congress opposed Gandhiji and made the famous Poona Offer of conditional cooperation with the British Government in the War effort, Badshah Khan, true to his creed, was the only member of the Working Committee who stood by Gandhiji. He resigned from the Working Committee on the issue of non-violence, on which Gandhiji had broken away from the Congress.

In January 1947, when communal frenzy had broken out in several parts of India, Badshah Khan, at Gandhiji's bidding, rushed to Bihar to join him in his pilgrimage of penance. Wherever he addressed a meeting, his simple words struck a responsive chord in his hearers. At the close of one such meeting, in Gurdwara Harmandir, Patna, the birthplace of Guru Govind Singh, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs accompanied him to a mosque adjacent to the Gurudwara, exchanged greetings and embraced one another.

From Bihar the conflagration spread to his own province. Again, he, with ten thousand of his unarmed Khudai Khidmatgars, marched into the city of Peshawar, bringing peace and protection to members of the threatened minority community there.

In June 1947 the Congress, despite Gandhiji's opposition, accepted Lord Mountbatten's Partition Plan. To Lord Ismay,

Lord Mountbatten's war-time aide and chief of personal staff, and to the pro-Muslim League coterie of British officials, the N.W.F.P. represented a 'bastard situation', a Muslim-majority province with a Congress Ministry, almost a violation of nature! To remedy it, Sir Olaf Caroe, the Governor of the N.W.F.P., proposed dismissal of the Khan Saheb Ministry and holding fresh elections in the province. The Khan Brothers strongly objected to this. The Congress gave an ultimatum that, if the Frontier Ministry was tampered with, they would have nothing to do with the Mountbatten Partition Plan. The proposal for a fresh election was thereupon dropped and the holding of a referendum substituted in its place, to decide whether the Frontier Province would accede to India or to Pakistan.

The Khan Brothers said that the issue of India versus Pakistan was dead, India having accepted in principle the Partition of the Punjab, which completely isolated them from India geographically. 'Let there be a referendum on the issue of autonomy for the Pathans in their homeland', Badshah Khan said, 'and if the masses vote in favour of accession to Pakistan as against a Free Pathan State I shall be the first person to support Pakistan.' In the alternative, the Pathans wanted absolute freedom to manage their affairs in an autonomous unit consisting of all Pushtu-speaking people, irrespective of race or religion. This autonomous Pukhtoon unit would frame its own provincial constitution and might later decide which Dominion to accede to—Pakistan or India—after the full picture of the respective constitutions of the two was known to them. This was unacceptable to the Muslim League. Gandhiji in his post-prayer speech on 30 June 1947 observed that it was difficult for him to understand the objection to Khan Saheb's yearning for Pathan autonomy, unless the object was 'to humiliate the Pathans and to tame them into subjection'.

The fact was that, finding power slipping out of their hands, the higher British officials in the North West Frontier Province were determined to salvage as much of it as possible by passing it on to their protege and 'traditional ally', the Muslim League. At the 1946 election in the Frontier Province, the Congress had won 32 out of 50 seats, including 21 out of the 36 Muslim seats, all the 9 Hindu seats and 2 of 3 Sikh seats. To circumvent this

verdict, a referendum was forced upon it. In Baluchistan, on the other hand, where in the absence of an elected representative body, a referendum provided the only rational solution, to circumvent its verdict, a quasi-representative body, composed of the State Jirga and nominated members of the Quetta Municipality, was set up.

This was sharp practice, like what corrupt government departments and corporations resort to when, in inviting tenders or advertising for posts, they lay down specifications tailored to suit the party they have decided in advance to favour. Lord Mountbatten said he was 'definitely committed' to a referendum in the N.W.F.P. and would resign if he could not have his way. Privately, he dropped a hint that the chances of the Congress winning the referendum were fifty-fifty. The Congress High Command swallowed the bait—hook, line and sinker. They accepted the modified Mountbatten plan for the partition of India with the provision for a referendum in the North-West Frontier Province.

Both the Congress and the Muslim League having accepted the Mountbatten Partition Plan in principle, and an autonomous Pukhtoonistan being ruled out, the British offer to the Pathans was only a Hobson's choice in the garb of a constitutional formula. Gandhiji refused to have anything to do with the fraud. He left the decision to the Khan Brothers. The Khan Brothers were not prepared to gamble with the destiny of millions of Pukhtoons by staking it on a lucky throw in a game which was to be played with loaded dice. The Provincial Jirga of the Pukhtoons therefore decided not to participate in the referendum.

On 18 June in a meeting with Jinnah, Badshah Khan made still another offer to come to an honourable settlement with him. This offer too, like the previous one, was turned down. Gandhiji saw the dark clouds gathering over the Khan Brothers' head. The prospect kept him awake till half-past twelve that night. 'I cannot help thinking of Badshah Khan even when I have shed the desire of living up to 125 years', he remarked, 'Badshah Khan is a prodigy. For such a person there can be no defeat.' He then tried to sleep. But after a while he again opened his eyes and said, 'No, I cannot . . . the thought of him has robbed me of my sleep.'

Disquieting reports kept pouring in from the Frontier Province. In one of his letters to Gandhiji Badshah Khan described how Punjabi Muslims were being freely imported into the Province by the Muslim League, and how open threats of murder, and of trials on the line of Nuremburg of those held to be 'traitors' to Islam were being held out, and presiding officers actively encouraging bogus votes. Gandhiji wrote about this to Lord Mountbatten, who passed on the complaint to the Governor of the N.W.F.P. Apparently it had little effect on that high functionary, for things continued to be as before.

The referendum was held in this climate of intimidation, violence and open collusion between British officials and the Muslim League. The Khudai Khidmatgar party and their supporters took no part in it and the Frontier Province was declared to be a part of Pakistan with a majority of a little over 50 per cent. A company commander subsequently confessed to Badshah Khan, as a fellow prisoner in a Pakistan prison, that he had got his company to vote thrice in the referendum so-called.

'So, Mahatmaji, hereafter you will regard us as Pakistanis. Won't you?' Badshah Khan said to Gandhiji on the eve of the 3 June acceptance by the Congress of the principle of the Partition Plan. 'A terrible fate awaits us in the N.W.F.P.' Gandhiji replied, 'Khan Saheb, non-violence knows no despair. It is your hour of trial. You can declare that Pakistan is altogether unacceptable to you and brave the worst.' To his companions Gandhiji said, 'The sight of his grief wrings my heart. But if I were to give way to my grief, brave Pathan that he is, it will break his heart.' It was his intention, he declared, to go to the N.W.F.P. 'If Pakistan comes into being, my place will be in Pakistan.'

On 29 July 1947 Gandhiji left Delhi for Kashmir and Badshah Khan returned to his province to make it *pak* (pure), as Gandhiji had exhorted. As Badshah Khan took leave, he remarked to Gandhiji's companions, 'Mahatmaji has shown us the true path. Long after we are no more, the coming generation of Hindus will remember him as an *avtar* of Krishna, Muslims as God's messenger and Christians as another Prince of Peace. That will be a proud day for India. . . . May God spare him for long.' For himself, he said, 'Pray for us that He may give us courage and faith—We are going to be faced with terrible times.'

They never met again.

Some six weeks before the end, fearing for the Khan Brothers' safety in Pakistan, Gandhiji wrote to Badshah Khan inviting him openly to leave the Frontier Province and develop the non-violent technique from a base in India. 'This you can do with me or otherwise. What that otherwise can be I do not know.' The other alternative was to remain where he was and let the Pakistan authorities do their worst. 'I do not believe', he concluded, 'that non-violence can only be offered in a civilized society. Non-violence admits of no such limit.' Badshah Khan was not the one to run away from an ordeal. He chose instead to stay where he was, to bear witness to his faith in the Master and the Master's faith in him.

On 16 May 1948, four and a half months after Gandhiji's assassination, Badshah Khan was arrested on a charge of 'sedition' and 'intended collaboration with the hostile Faqir of Ippi'. Beyond pleading not-guilty, he refused to take part in the proceedings of the court and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The continued incarceration of the Khan Brothers and Khudai Khidmatgars constituted a challenge to the civilized conscience of the world. If ever there was a case of martyred innocence sanctified by devotion of the highest ideals, it was theirs—particularly Badshāh Khan's. Whatever the political difference they may have had with the government in power, their integrity was above question. They declared their acceptance of Pakistan. I remember how, after partition, during my last stay with Gandhiji in December 1947 and January 1948, Badshah Khan sent word to Gandhiji that he should not worry about them. They had deliberately decided not to meet him or write to him as they wanted to put their bonafides above suspicion. It would be doing them cruel wrong to suspect them of double-dealing or treachery. They were incapable of both. They loved their country and its people with a deep, passionate love. Badshah Khan is straight and simple by nature and guileless, at times to the point of embarrassment. This is what Gandhiji, who had tested him through and through, wrote about Badshah Khan in 1938 after the historic tour of the N.W.F.P. in his company:

Whatever the Khudai Khidmatgars may be or may ultimately turn out to be, there can be no doubt about what their leader whom they delight to call 'Badshah Khan' is. He is unquestionably a man of God. He believes in His living presence and knows that his movement will prosper only if God wills it. Having put his whole soul into his cause, he remains indifferent as to what happens. It is enough for him to realise that there is no deliverance for the Pathan except through out-and-out acceptance of non-violence. He does not want to see his Pathan as a goonda of society. He believes that the Pathan has been exploited and kept in ignorance. He wants the Pathan to become braver than he is and wants him to add true knowledge to his bravery. This he thinks can only be achieved through non-violence.

There is no humbug about him. He is an utter stranger to affectation. . . . And so when we parted at Taxila our eyes were wet.

In the course of the same tour Badshah Khan once poured out his soul to Gandhiji in words that lay bare the innermost springs of his being. Here are his exact words taken down as he spoke and recorded in *Harijan*:

Mahatmaji, this land, so rich in fruit and grain, might well have been a smiling little Eden upon this earth, but it has today fallen under a blight. My conviction is daily growing deeper that more than anything else, violence has been the bane of us Pathans in this province. It shattered our solidarity and tore us with wretched internal feuds. The entire strength of the Pathan is today spent in thinking how to cut the throat of his brother. To what fruitful use this energy might not be put if only we could be rid of this curse?

Whatever may be the case with other provinces, I am firmly convinced that so far as the Frontier Province is concerned, the non-violence movement is the greatest boon that God has sent to us. There is no other way of salvation for the Pathan except through non-violence. I say this from experience of the miraculous transformation that even the little measure of non-violence that we have attained has wrought in our midst. Mahatmaji, we used to be so timid, and indolent. The sight of an Englishman would frighten us. We thought nothing of wasting our time in idleness. Your movement has changed all this. It has instilled fresh life into us and made us more industrious so that a piece of land that formerly used to yield hardly ten rupees worth of produce, now produces double that amount. We have shed our fear and are no longer afraid of an Englishman or, for the matter of that, of any man. . . . Englishmen are afraid of our non-violence. A non-violent Pathan, they say, is more dangerous than a violent Pathan. If we could assimilate and put into practice the whole of the doctrine of non-violence as you have explained it to us, how much stronger, and better off we would be. We were on the brink of utter ruination. But God in His mercy sent us the non-violence movement to save us in our extremity.

Such a person can never be an enemy of a state that calls itself Islamic. The Khan Brothers are of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. They bear enmity towards none. They have no axe to grind. They would be content to lay down their lives for the cause for which they lived, to the exclusion of all else. It is, therefore, well with them. But, surely, a better use could be found for such servants of God than to bury them alive in prison.

Pakistan did try to win over Dr Khan Saheb and he did join the Government. But unfortunately he was murdered in his own house. The tragic death of Dr Khan Saheb at the hands of an assassin took away from amongst us one of those rare spirits in whom Indian humanity had reached its high water-mark. His transparent sincerity and honesty of purpose won him the respect and regard of even those who were ranged against him, while his warm, expansive nature, broad humanity and child-like open-heartedness endeared him to all who came in contact with him. It is curious that the British feared Badshah Khan, Dr Khan Saheb's younger brother, although he did more than anyone else to wean the Pathans from violence. But they loved Dr Khan Saheb even when they jailed him. One of the reasons perhaps was that Dr Khan Saheb symbolized the outstanding trait on which the Briton prides himself, namely sportsmanship. Dr Khan Saheb was a sport, every inch of him.

To give an illustration, after the Gandhi-Irwin truce of 1931, the British officials in the North West Frontier Province felt sore over what they regarded as defeat for themselves. The soldier Colonel Sir Robert Sanderman, in the course of a visit to Peshawar with his 'Guides' during the truce, did not disguise his feeling from Dr Khan Saheb. The good doctor at once put him at ease saying 'No, Colonel, dismiss the thought of your having been defeated entirely. Political life is a game in which the victor and the vanquished must shake hands with one another as much as in a game of cricket or football. In the present case there is no question of victory. We have just had a draw in which there is no victor and no vanquished.' On parting, the soldier said to Dr Khan Saheb: 'Well . . . I hope and pray the "Guides" may not have to be guilty of anything bad in Charsada.'

Dr Khan Saheb was a God-fearing Muslim, though he cared little either for abstract philosophy or outward forms of religion. 'I leave my brother to say the names for both of us', he often used to say in jest. He was nevertheless a deeply religious man; his religion was unassuming service of suffering humanity.

In 1934, the Khan Brothers came to Gandhiji at Wardha on their release from Hazaribagh Prison. Dr Khan Saheb, without the slightest ado, took upon himself the task of looking after patients in the household of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who was his host. Not content with that, he offered his services as a doctor for the women and girls' Ashram in Wardha and began to tramp ten to fifteen miles a day to do sanitation work in the neighbouring villages. A former member of the I.M.S., he never considered it beneath his dignity to give fomentations, or cut vegetables for soup he had prescribed for one of his patients.

His approach to problems was practical rather than dogmatic or philosophical. Although he followed the discipline of non-violence loyally and faithfully as very few did, he was too much of a soldier to bother his head with the philosophical aspect of non-violence. 'What will you do, Dr Khan Saheb, if someone invaded the Frontier Province?' a colleague once asked him when the Congress Working Committee was discussing the creed of non-violence in the event of an armed invasion. Straight came the reply: 'Why, I will shoulder my rifle and drive out the invader!'

He had been the Premier of the N.W.F.P. before the partition of India and joined the Pakistan Government because he felt that, in the circumstances, it was the only way of serving the ideals for which he had lived and suffered. The confidence which the displaced minorities from Pakistan had in him was a measure of his sincerity. It was a sight to see the rousing welcome which the refugees from the Frontier Province accorded him at Faridabad refugee colony at the time of his only visit to India after Independence. He advised them to wait in faith and patience for the day when they would be able to go back and settle again in their original homes. What is more, they implicitly believed his words and were consoled. He became the symbol of the hope of the minorities in Pakistan.

Power did not corrupt him, nor did his adversities and political sufferings dampen his spirit. I went to see him at the time of

his last visit to Delhi with some hesitation, lest it should embarrass him politically. But my fears were soon set at rest. At Rashtrapati Bhavan, where he was staying as a state guest, the Pakistan High Commissioner, Raja Ghaznafar Ali Khan, who was a friend and a classmate of mine in Government College, Lahore, came to see Khan Saheb when Mehar Chand Khanna and I were talking to him. With him had come the Governor-General of Pakistan and some other Pakistani Ministers. The Pakistan High Commissioner had arranged an At Home in honour of the Pakistani Ministers. 'You might send us the names of your Indian friends whom you would like to be at the party', the High Commissioner said to Dr Khan Saheb, casting a glance at us. 'But my friends may not like to be in your company', was Dr Khan Saheb's disconcerting reply!

His death was mourned in India and Pakistan alike—a rare honour for any individual in these days of strained Indo-Pakistan relations and, may I add, by the same token also a promise of hope for the future.

On 30 January 1948 Gandhiji died and Badshah Khan was left to plough his lonely furrow. The unanswered enigma in Gandhiji's last cryptic remark has now been answered for us. Twenty-two years after the attainment of independence by India, out of which Badshah Khan has spent fifteen in Pakistani prisons, Badshah Khan came back to us without Gandhiji to help us develop the technique of non-violence and return to the path on which Gandhiji had set us. Before Independence he had passed another fifteen years in British jails during India's fight for freedom. As if to put his faith to the final test, India confronted him, on the eve of his arrival, with an orgy of communal madness, of all places in Gandhiji's Gujarat. He could easily have said to us, 'You threw us to the wolves and left us to stew in our own juice. You now stew in yours for this second betrayal of the Master.' Instead, he said: 'I have come here after twenty-two years, drawn by your love, and for the love that I bear towards you and Gandhiji's memory. I have not come here to beg for money, nor even to seek your help for Pakhtoonistan.' He did not come here to make us his disciples either. 'I am a Khudai Khidmatgar, servant of God, and not your leader', he said. He came to protest against violence and communalism, to

wean us from which Gandhiji had laid down his life. If we needed his services he was here to serve us. He had always considered himself to be a part of us and us a part of him. He had come to atone for our misdeeds. He backed his declaration by performing a three-day penitential fast.

Badshah Khan warned us that nations are made by dint of selfless sacrifice; they declined and perished when they succumbed to the lust for power and pelf. He wanted us to take a lesson from events in Pakistan and mend our ways. It was and is for us to set the good example and put our house in order. We, India and Pakistan, might then still become good neighbours and a stabilizing force for the rest of Asia.

Dismal as the outlook at the moment seems to be, I am sure there are beneath the heaps of cold ashes strewn all over the country plenty of live sparks awaiting to be blown into flame. It is our great luck to have had in our midst to help us with his inspiration and guidance a man who for the last twenty years and more has borne witness to his undying faith in the Master and the Master's in him, with an unswerving steadfastness under circumstances that might have made any heart, less stout than his, quail.

Rajaji—Gandhiji's *Alter Ego* and Conscience-Keeper

The die was cast for Rajaji when Gandhiji became his guest during his visit to Madras in April 1919, in connection with the launching of Satyagraha against the Rowlatt legislation. After establishing himself as a leading luminary of the bar in his home town of Salem, Rajaji had only recently moved to Madras. He had hardly finished unpacking his law books downstairs when he was summoned for a talk by Gandhiji to his room on the first floor. On the previous night Mahadev Desai had 'discovered' Rajaji and reported his find to his Master. Before Rajaji came down he had given up his law practice for good. The suddenness of the decision took everybody by surprise. For years he had followed Gandhiji's meteoric and stormy career in South Africa from afar. But he was too much of a rationalist to fall suddenly under anybody's spell. Even in his eulogistic review of *Indian Home Rule*, the earliest to appear in India so far as I am aware, he had the following sly dig: 'Naturally the Editor is the better debater.' As everybody knows, this booklet is written in the form of a Socratic dialogue between the author, cast as 'Editor', and his friend, Dr Pranjivan Mehta, in the role of the 'Reader'. The dig was intended, as it were, to warn the reader not to be taken in too readily by the dialectics of the Editor, who could not but be biased in favour of his own viewpoint, and therefore could not be expected to let his adversary have the best of the argument.

What conquered Rajaji, I think, was the dead earnestness behind the conclusions presented in that book which the author had endeavoured with all his heart and soul to translate into his life. Here was a man who was not afraid to face and follow deductions of his reason and conscience to their logical conclusions, no matter where they might take him. Such a person is

very rare in this world. Rajaji had found one such in Gandhiji. He needed nothing more.

I do not know who at the time congratulated himself more on his find—Rajaji, who had at last found in Gandhiji his pole star or Gandhiji, who had found in this Shankaracharya of South Indian politics a unique interpreter of his philosophy, his standard bearer and *alter ego* rolled into one, and his conscience-keeper besides, which he continued to be even when he ceased to see eye to eye with Gandhiji on many current political issues. The difference was superficial; the basic loyalty that united them was far too deep and strong to be affected by the fissures that showed on the surface. It never suffered diminution or change.

2

For a considerable time after I joined Gandhiji I had been content to admire Rajaji from a distance. It was an accident, or shall I call it a stroke of good luck, that brought me into close touch with him and revealed to me the shy, sensitive, warm, affectionate spirit behind that forbidding mask of his cynicism. In May 1922 I was staying at Anand Bhawan, the historic residence of the Nehrus at Allahabad. Gandhiji had been providing Motilalji with a succession of editors for his daily, *Independent*. I received the following wire from Rajaji at this stage:

YOU MUST JOIN YOUNG INDIA IMMEDIATELY. REMAINING SABARMATHI . . . ANNOUNCING MY NAME EDITOR. WIRE YOUR CONSENT . . .

After Gandhiji's arrest and sentence of imprisonment for six years, the editorship of *Young India* had been taken up first by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the hero of an earlier era and editor of the prestigious *Dawn* magazine, and then by Shwaib Qureshi who later became Maulana Mohammed Ali's son-in-law. A little later, Shwaib also resigned and Rajaji became editor of *Young India*. He wanted me to take over charge of the weekly as assistant editor at Ahmedabad.

The prospect of being in the 'active firing line' had gripped me. I was impatient to offer civil disobedience and join my two comrades, Mahadev and Devadas in prison. I replied to Rajaji, begging to be excused on the ground of my utter inexperience

in journalism, and whatever other shortcomings I could think of, to put him off. But he would have none of it. Some of my writings in the manuscript *Independent* had caught his attention. Brushing aside my elaborate excuses, he wrote back: 'I do not quite like your plan of courting imprisonment . . . but of this we will talk when we meet. I have a fear that I may not meet you at all, and that the last editor of the handwritten *Independent* will not go without the honour accorded to his predecessors.' Alluding to the catalogue of my shortcomings in a postscript he added: 'You can't better describe what I feel regarding myself when I contemplate the responsibility now undertaken by me. But if you are at Ahmedabad, and I here, I think we could pull the thing through.'

In the meantime my plan of offering civil disobedience was sabotaged in an unexpected manner. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was to be held in Anand Bhawan. Pandits Nehru, father and son, were in prison. They sent word, laying upon me the duty of making arrangements for the Committee meeting and of getting piloted through it a resolution on the boycott of foreign cloth and the picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. If I courted arrest or allowed myself to be arrested before seeing my charge through, they added, a 'vote of censure' would be passed against me. I had to see it through.

Soon after the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, first Pandit Motilal and then Pandit Jawaharlal were released, Jawaharlal only to be re-arrested before many days on a charge of preventing people pursuing their 'lawful' vocation (dealing in foreign cloth and running liquor shops), and of 'extortion', i.e. imposing fines and realizing them from foreign cloth dealers who had broken their pledges not to deal in foreign cloth. Then my uncle, who was like a father to me and had meant to me everything in this world, fell seriously ill. An urgent wire called me home. I had to go, leaving behind half a dozen issues of the handwritten *Independent* to be released in my absence on due dates. This was done, the last issue of the handwritten sheet, with its motto 'I change but cannot die', being reproduced in full in the first issue of the resurrected daily, after the repeal of the Press Act.

In the result it was only in September 1922 that I could join *Young India* at Ahmedabad. In his very first letter to me in

Ahmedabad Rajaji wrote: 'Your arrival at Ahmedabad was timed providentially. Not only am I unable to exert physically but I feel quite dry in the brain. *Young India* is, therefore, entirely in your charge.' I could not have wished for a warmer or more encouraging greeting.

Thus began an association that I have dearly treasured and which has grown with the years.

3

The initiation into journalism that I received in the following months under Rajaji, was replete with rich and varied experience. Not only did I learn my steps; but also what it meant to cope with the exigencies of peripatetic editorship. Rajaji was constantly on the move. Besides, he was doggedly wrestling all the time against ill-health. Not infrequently, the matter posted by him during his train journeys reached me late; sometimes it failed to reach at all. This put the mettle of the man on the spot to the severest test. Once he had sent a leading article as a Press message telegraphically on the last day. It was delivered to me at midnight, a few hours before going to press and then only the second half of it. The first half was delivered after the week's issue was printed. Luckily the second half contained all the editorial comment. The other half carried the story of the event commented on, which I reconstructed from the facts that I already knew. Efforts in telegraphic transmission constituted another headache and when chunks of matter sent to the telegraph office for transmission got jumbled and were delivered not in their due order, but out of series, the resulting confusion might better be imagined than described.

To keep me *au courant* Rajaji used to take me with him to all the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and of the Working Committee of the Congress. In December 1922 I had accompanied him to Calcutta. On arrival there we received a wire saying that my assistant, in whose charge I had left the printing of the next issue of *Young India*, had fallen ill. I had, therefore, to rush back to Ahmedabad the same evening. I wrote an article during the train journey. As the next issue was to be a double issue, with a comprehensive survey of the progress of constructive work in all the provinces, based on nearly six hundred reports which had to be studied, digested and collated,

I had to work for about sixty hours at a stretch, without any rest or sleep. Rajaji's copy as usual was sent from Calcutta telegraphically. It consisted of a leading article and note which, although it read like a continuation of the leading article, was meant to be printed separately. The result was a jumble. Rajaji was happy with the piece that I had done but distressed by the mess that telegraphic transmission of his contribution had resulted in. His comment was characteristic. 'Two articles, one as it appears, and the other . . . have been printed together, the latter running on from the other like a tail. However, being organically connected the thing is saved from much ugliness. A kind of monkey with a long tail; telegraphic contributions cannot hope for a better assembling.' The same letter brought also the following: 'I must offer you my congratulations for the beautiful article, "Thus to be patched and cobbled in one's grave". Why should you not have put it up as the leading article? Your modesty (or is it only a sense of discipline?) should not interfere with your faculty of judgment. However, it is well that an assistant editor errs on the side of humility.'

Having crammed all this in a postcard when it called for the use of a postal cover, he impishly added in a postscript: 'I have cheated Government of 6 pies!' On the following day he again wrote: 'Your letter reached me this morning. While its literary beauty pleases me, the hard realities behind it make me feel anxious. . . . Do see that you get rest and fresh air and exercise at least for a few days in the week regularly. The steady flow of thought in sound health is more fulfilling than the irregular high potential brain. Moreover the body must exist for any brain to work . . . I write all this as I am rather anxious about your health.'

In the first quarter of 1923 Mahadev Desai was released. But Rajaji continued to fret over his inability to send as much matter as he would have liked to. 'I have not been without imagination', he wrote in one of his letters, 'to see what excruciating anxiety and trouble you suffer each time you deliver *Young India* at the press without sufficient (or any) matter from me. The truth is that you and Mahadevbhai should consider yourselves as joint and responsible editors of *Young India* and I only favour you with concessions when I write.'

Later, when the controversy between the 'no-changers' and

'pro-changers' was at its height, Mahadev Desai and I launched on a filibuster on our own in a series of articles, writing alternately by turn. As ours was pretty 'hot stuff' and the targets of our shafts were those for whom we had the greatest regard and whom we did not wish to give an opportunity to turn round and say *et tu Brute*, we wrote under the pen name 'New Rebels', a variation of C. R. Das's description of himself as a 'Rebel' in one of his speeches. It brought from Rajaji the following in a letter to Devadas, the sharp medicine being tempered, as was Rajaji's wont, with a sweetening:

The last issue of *Young India* . . . was superb. I got an art paper copy sent, very carefully packed by proud Pyarelal. Pyarelal is a jewel.

Tell him I would prefer the 'New Rebels' to disclose anonymity. Anonymity is against the established spirit of *Young India*. I know we have infringed the rule. Initials are permitted but there should not be too much of the usual style of anonymity and pseudonymity. However, that is one thing. But I at least should know who it is. Is it (A. T.) Gidwani?

Here are some more nuggets picked up at random from his letters:

I don't like the black lines for the note on Motibabu's [Motilal Ghosh of the *A. B. Patrika*] death. It is not in keeping with *Young India* . . . for mourning (in black) is not, I believe, in India's tradition.

* * *

You are right in not inserting the Lucknow Jail message . . . we should not publish smuggled things unless of course they are of supreme over-riding consequence.

Your note drawing attention to the Sikh soldiers' protest is good. I wish you would write more. Indeed, I fear you must, as I am finding it more and more difficult to cope with the work from here [Salem].

Once, having written an article, 'Dawn of Deliverance', I asked Rajaji's permission to reproduce in the next issue of *Young India* something that had appeared in *The New Republic*. In reply he wired:

CONGRATULATIONS 'DAWN OF DELIVERANCE'. DONT THINK MUCH OF *new republic* articles. you can write much better

I felt he had overrated my piece. His eulogy embarrassed me. But what did it matter in the morning of life to a mind intoxicated with the rising sap of spring?

When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen.

One took everything in one's stride—the rough and the smooth alike. It is part of the game.

Sometimes afterwards I lost my uncle and had again to go home. Rajaji then wrote: 'You are in terrible distress. I am unwilling to add to your anguish. But I wish you were at Ahmedabad and acted as guardian of *Young India*. I have not sent a line for this week's issue. . . . You ought to be there, discuss things freely and dish up things more appropriately. But do your family affairs allow you to run away?'

4

Two outstanding events of the year of Gandhiji's arrest were the Guru Ka Bagh Satyagraha by the Sikhs at Amritsar, and appointment by the Congress of what came to be known as the Civil Disobedience Inquiry Committee. The Committee consisted of Pandit Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr M. A. Ansari, Vithalbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalchari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar. It was to report whether the state of the country warranted resumption of Civil Disobedience or whether some other programme should be devised to take its place. Vithalbhai Patel, it was well known, was not in favour of continuation of the non-cooperation programme with its four-fold boycott. He was for entry into the Councils, with a view to creating a political deadlock. He had managed to bring into the Committee, behind Pandit Motilal's back, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, the editor of the *Hindu*, to serve as a counterweight to Rajaji, who was at that time irrevocably wedded to Gandhiji's programme of non-violent non-cooperation without any change. In spite of Vithalbhai's manipulation, Rajaji was able to get the Committee in its final meeting at Patna to recommend continuation of Gandhiji's programme. The Committee's report was to be placed for consideration before a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee that was scheduled to be held on 15 August 1922. Mysteriously, however, the meeting in question was not held, nor was the report of the Committee published.

Rajaji had been under the impression that postponement of

the publication of the report was due to drafting delays. He was, therefore, mystified when in the second week of October he received a wire from Hakim Ajmal Khan Sahab asking him to attend the Committee meeting at Allahabad as there were 'some modifications which required your seeing the report before publication.' Unknown to Rajaji important developments had been taking place behind the scenes. Deshbandhu C. R. Das had been released. On the occasion of the marriage of his second daughter some of the prominent Congress leaders had met in Calcutta. It was there, as was later revealed, that Pandit Motilal Nehru was weaned by Deshbandhu from his opposition to Council entry. Rajaji was not at all well and was unfit to leave when he received Hakim Sahab's wire, but he decided to go whether well or ill. On his way back to Salem from Calcutta he wrote in a letter:

What do you think? Panditji and Hakimji have both resiled from the decisions arrived at after full consultation at Patna and have gone over to Mr Das's position of entering councils for purposes of 'total obstruction'. I got a wire from Delhi on 9th instant for the first time intimating that material modification of the decisions had taken place and inviting me to meet the other members at Allahabad. I went therefore in spite of illness and found the crew in this new condition. So, Mr Patel, Panditji and Hakimji are on one side. Dr Ansari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and myself on the other. Panditji had made up his mind in the new position so far that I found no scope for further modification. This then is the sadness we are in. The report will consist of two differing views on this point. In other matters too, naturally Panditji's position has become different from what all expected of him, viz., boycott of British goods, self-defence, etc. The extent to which he has gone over Pateltwards is most disappointing. Of course all this is yet most confidential.

Communalism had raised its ugly head and exacted a heavy toll of life and property in Multan. Rajaji had suggested to Hakim Sahab as a symbolic gesture to get some money from the Khilafat fund to be donated for the relief of Hindu victims of the mob fury in Multan. Hakim Sahab replied that he would refer the matter to the Central Khilafat Committee. But the Committee instead passed a resolution recommending collection of funds to provide a fighter plane and an Angora legion to be raised and sent to Turkey. Rajaji was sorely grieved. He wrote:

The cup of our disappointment is full to the brim. Not to speak of the Nehru-Ajmal Khan disaster (and I have not yet had a final intimation from

Dr Ansari either, whether he too is among them at the base of Pompey's statue or with us). Just read the resolutions of the Central Khilafat Committee at Delhi—money, aeroplanes, toys and madness of all kinds about Angora and a big resolution, empty and heartless, over the Multan tragedy. . . . You say the Angora legion impossibility must be clear even to a child. Yet it is a sad truth that there are more children among us than they know.

But there was hope, he felt. The day might yet be retrieved. A few days later he wrote from Salem: 'Sarojini Naidu is with us, if that is anything. Hakimji—that is a decisive loss! Motilalji—who would have thought it, and can we now belittle his views? Dr Ansari presides over the Khilafat Conference at Gaya, and if he leads off with a clear pronouncement we shall carry the day yet.'

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was to be held in the last week of December at Calcutta, to discuss the recommendations of the Civil Disobedience Committee's report. Rajaji began to brace himself for the fight:

I fully see the importance of organizing ourselves. The forces ranged against us are heavy. The training we have given to the mass mind of worship of big men—is against us. The trouble is who is to undertake all this and get disciplines enforced? I am sick and weary of it all; without strict discipline we are sure to be lost even in the AICC, not to speak of living through it in the country afterwards. I hope Mr Vallabhbhai Patel will soon think about the matter and will solve the difficulties. He does not yet know the situation. Only Sethji [Seth Jamnalal Bajaj] knows. I have written to him and to none else. Before and certainly after the A.I.C.C. meeting we should all meet and have our policy fixed up. But how and under whom can we control the irresponsible tempers that make up our wild army?

So powerful was the spell exercised by Gandhiji over the minds of Congressmen that not all the eloquence of veteran leaders like Motilalji and C. R. Das with the weight of their personal presence could prevail, and under the pressure of opposition led by Rajaji the decision on the vital question of Council-entry and related issues was postponed till the annual session of the Congress at Gaya.

At the Gaya session of the Congress, held under the presidency of C. R. Das in December 1922, Rajaji scored his biggest triumph. His skill in debate, incisive logic, scintillating wit and devastating sarcasm carried the day. But an even more decisive factor was his loyalty to Gandhiji and the loyalty of the people

to Gandhiji and what Gandhiji stood for, which Rajaji symbolized in his person. So close in the popular imagination was his identification with Gandhiji that some even asked if he had taken to goat's milk like Gandhiji. The Congress voted against Council-entry and confirmed the other three boycotts—of Government law courts, of Government educational institutions and of foreign cloth—while authorizing the Provincial Congress Committees to launch on Civil Disobedience as and when the situation demanded and they were ready for it. The A.I.C.C. resolved on 1 January 1923 to enrol 25,000 volunteers and collect a fund of Rs 25 lakhs for satyagraha, before 30 April.

Rajaji carried the day but at the cost of Congress unity. C. R. Das resigned his Presidentship. With Motilal Nehru and other Congressmen of their persuasion he went out of the Congress and formed the Swaraj Party. Those who stood for Gandhiji's original programme came to be known as 'no-changers'; those who accepted the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das as 'pro-changers', or 'Swarajists'. As leader of the 'no-changers', Rajaji showed the same grit, resolution, and intellectual vigour, as he had shown earlier, but the tide of history was setting against him. A permissive resolution on Council-entry was passed at the Delhi session of the Congress in September 1923. The same was reiterated in the Congress session at Kakinada. Rajaji had won the battles but lost the fight.

At the 1923 elections the Swaraj Party swept the polls and Gandhiji, who had been brought to Sassoon Hospital at Poona for an emergency operation for appendicitis, was released on the eve of the resolution to be introduced by the Swaraj Party in the Central Assembly for his unconditional release. One of the first things he did when he recovered strength sufficiently to look around him and actively participate in public activity was to dissolve the party that had been formed in his absence in support of his programme, and before the year was out had invited the Swaraj Party to take charge of the Congress, while resolving to devote himself exclusively to constructive work.

Rajaji had conquered but in Satyagraha one has not to defeat but win the opponent even by surrendering the gains of victory and embracing defeat in order that the opponent's thinking might be changed and truth and justice enthroned. Satyagraha

is not ju-jitsu, which ends with the defeat of one party; rather it is transmutation of one or the other or both the parties, so that they find a common meeting ground in truth. The end is victory without the sting of defeat, a conquest that is loved as well by the conquered as by him who has achieved the conquest. 'People see and admire the fighter in me but they miss my capacity for surrender from which my power of assault springs', Gandhiji explained once in a letter to K. Natarajan, the editor of *Indian Social Reformer*. A fighter first and last, he chose to fight for his opponents instead of against them, so that they would fight with him in the common cause, when the time came, as they actually did later.

5

Thus ended my apprenticeship under Rajaji. But the bonds of mutual affection that had been forged between us remained. Thereafter my relation with him became like that of a son and father who could freely share with each other the sweet and bitter of life. I would fain share with the reader some of the vignettes illustrative of this phase but must not; it is too sacred. Suffice it to say that I could always depend upon him for wise counsel and guidance in facing life's problems and he upon me for whatever service and consolation I could bring. It was not much, in either case the gain was wholly mine.

In Gandhiji's circle Rajaji's visits were always looked forward to with avidity. Their unbounded love and regard for each other turned a meeting between them into a gala occasion for us—a rich feast of sparkling wit and humour that made Gandhiji's little adobe hut ring with roars of laughter. Rajaji had a sharp tongue but like 'a polished razor keen' it caused the ritual wound with a touch 'that is scarcely felt or seen'. The wound was meant to heal, not hurt. Like a surgeon's knife, it removed the scab without leaving a scar behind. Rajaji was unsparing but never heartless or cruel. He could be angry but not vindictive. Once someone was narrating to him how a certain lady, who had of late been spitting venom against Gandhiji and his non-cooperation movement, was once bitten by a 'worm'—a euphemism for a snake. With mock concern Rajaji exclaimed: 'And what happened?' And then quietly added, 'to the worm!' On another occasion he told us how, when he was our Governor-

General, the Russian Ambassador, while presenting his credentials addressed him as 'Your Excellency'.

'But I thought you in Russia had discontinued the use of all titles', Rajaji asked with a twinkle.

'Yes, Your Excellency', the Russian diplomat replied. 'But that was at the outset of the Revolution. Then we realized it was a mistake.'

'What', Rajaji innocently exclaimed, 'the outset of Revolution was a mistake?' And not even the solemnity of the diplomatic ceremonial could repress a smile and a titter all around.

I have often seen Rajaji engage in a dialectical duel with his adversary. He confounds the adversary by assailing his position from every conceivable angle, his logic cuts clean through its matrix like a surgeon's knife. In the words of Dr Pattabhi, 'Elementary propositions are called in question, axiomatic truths denied, obvious postulates . . . put to proof.' The poor fellow throws up his hands and departs, reduced to a state of semi-idioty. Cold and unemotional, C. R. 'thinks nothing of the mortification felt by the helpless man. He has no pity for fools and is callous to a degree, for fools have no place in his world.' At another time, the adversary had fired his last shot, and was about to depart with 'a smile of triumph on his face' when, to quote Dr Pattabhi again, 'Out comes Rajaji with a new argument. A new aspect is discovered. The opponent's seeming triumph . . . leaves him helpless to meet the last-minute devastation of C. R.'s strange discovery. Who can solve the riddle? The key is only with C. R. and he is grinning with his white teeth under his dark glasses while the rest of the world is gaping with a cipher face of foolishness over the mystery before them.'

To be present at a discussion between Rajaji and Gandhiji was always an education. At the time of the Cripps Mission Gandhiji had actually egged Rajaji on to press with might and main his resolution against that of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhiji's view was that if the Congress did not wish to go his way of total rejection of the Cripps Plan, then Rajaji's was the right course to follow. But he blamed himself for not having opposed Rajaji sufficiently at the time of what is known as the 'Poona Offer'. Out of his great regard for Rajaji's judgement and honesty he had let himself doubt the correctness of his own interpretation 'to the point of allowing Rajaji to act

on his own', when Rajaji asserted with astonishing self-assurance that Gandhiji was wrong and he was right in the interpretation of non-violence and its implications. 'I was unjust to Rajaji because weak', Gandhiji declared; he should have prevented Rajaji from adopting the role that he had at Poona in Rajaji's own as well as in the interest of the Congress. For the Poona Offer, he argued, might have been unassailable from Rajaji's own viewpoint, as Rajaji thought it was, but it did not cease to be 'a denial of the last twenty years' past of the Congress', which was a humiliation for the Congress as it was for a Congressman of Rajaji's eminence and antecedents.

Similarly, while in detention at Poona, during the Quit India struggle, Gandhiji had allowed Rajaji to try to come to an agreement with the Muslim League and Jinnah on the basis of the national unity of India and the winning of India's Independence through the joint efforts of her own children without British intervention. The latter could only lead to monkey justice being dispensed to us as in the case of the two quarrelling cats in the fable. It was Gandhiji's firm conviction that no worse evil could befall India than partition and that at the hands of the British, or under the British aegis. Every other conceivable harm could, he held, be rectified, but that resulting from the partition of India at the hands of the British would be irreparable because irreversible. He could never doubt Rajaji's integrity and loyalty to him and to the country. Believing that an error committed in all good faith by an honest man of God can always be rectified, he had no hesitation in putting himself entirely in Rajaji's hands.

That Rajaji failed, that he was let down by those whose word he had trusted, and that, perhaps, this even accelerated India's partition, is a different matter. This is not the place to unravel the skein. It is enough that the two thoroughly understood each other and in the end in spite of the untoward result, felt as close to each other as ever. After Gandhiji's release, Rajaji met him in Sevagram in 1944. It was a flying visit. Gandhiji wanted him to come again for a longer discussion. Rajaji had become thoroughly unpopular with a section of Congressmen and even a suspect in their eyes because of his opposition to the Quit India struggle and his courtship by turns of British officials and Jinnah. This section did not like a meeting between Gandhiji and him. Both

the veterans knew it and even exchanged pleasant banter over it at each other's expense. This is how the dialogue proceeded:

Rajaji: I may be able to come to Sevagram by the 30th.

Gandhiji: So, I shall look out for you around the time you mention.

Rajaji: If you so desire.

Gandhiji: What is the meaning of 'looking out for you?'

Rajaji: One looks out for dangers, too, sometimes!

Gandhiji: You may put it that way. I want that danger also, I have to compare notes about several things.

Rajaji: I hope both of us will have by then forgotten some of our notes so that there will be none left.

Gandhiji: Then we shall laugh together and fatten.

The topic then changed to saltless diet.

Gandhiji: I have lived without salt for years in South Africa. Here I interrupted the rule but reverted to the saltless diet on further consideration.

Rajaji: When people are made to do without salt in their diet, they are likely to take to licking walls and eating clay like children to satisfy their natural craving for salt!

Gandhiji: It will do them good. The walls will be cleaner! This is the beginning of the laugh we shall abandon ourselves to at Sevagram when you come next.

It was now 9.45 p.m. and getting late for Gandhiji who wished to go to sleep, being an early riser.

Gandhiji: Now I am going to leave you if I am also to love you.

6

They again met in Mahabaleshwar in May 1945. Bhulabhai Desai had for some time been trying to negotiate a pact with Liaquat Ali. Rajaji felt that unless Gandhiji lent all his weight to Bhulabhai's effort, Bhulabhai had little chance of success, and if the Congress did not resume power in the Provinces the political deadlock would continue, which was just what the British wished. Gandhiji on the other hand felt that unless the Congress could return to power on its terms the wisest course would be to keep out.

C.R.: The people who are now saying they are doing your constructive work are really parliamentarians, but only one branch of it, and they seek power through your unofficial

influence whereas other parliamentarians are seeking it through constitutional channels. On the other hand, the only man who understands and can do your constructive work is myself.

Gandhiji: Yes.

C.R.: Are you thinking of dividing Congress work into functions?

Gandhiji: I am not thinking of division of functions. But there is a natural division. But I have not thought of compartments, lower and higher.

C.R.: It is like *Varna Vyavastha*.

Gandhiji: Horizontal, never vertical. But my conception certainly is that we can come into our own if all take up constructive work.

C.R.: Parliamentary work will help constructive work. But [constructive work] need not necessarily be our whole care.

Gandhiji: It replaces armed activity. But we can never come into our own through parliamentary activity [alone].

Rajaji put before Gandhiji the deadlock that had followed the situation created by the imprisonment of the members of the Congress Working Committee and the doctrine that no one could during that time act on behalf of the Congress. 'If on the one hand no one outside can act on behalf of the Congress and on the other hand the British Government won't release the Working Committee members unless a basis of reconciliation has been authoritatively agreed to, there is an insoluble tangle. Someone must sometime or the other act on behalf of the Congress and accept a scheme of settlement and, as a part of that scheme, the prisoners must be released. You must therefore act on behalf of the Congress. You know you are competent to do it. You say that every Congressman may act on his own authority as if he were president. But this is chaos. Suppose now there are a number of presidential candidates, the best man must win. That is you. The man who is in fact the best man to take up authority should take up responsibility at some time. There is no use asking others to negotiate without committing the Congress. There is no force behind Bhulabhai's efforts because you have not given open and unreserved approval to his proposals. Only if you take up the authority like a dictator, can a reasonable scheme of settlement have success. You must take up authority on behalf of the Congress some time.'

Gandhiji: That point may be reached some time, but not now.

C.R.: It may be that parliamentary activity will advance constructive work and that will help.

Gandhiji: Then you hold my view and I yours.

The dialogue was resumed on the following day. The fate of the Ashti Chimur prisoners was hanging in the balance. Following popular violence, the military had let loose unrestrained vendetta against the inhabitants of Ashti Chimur in the Central Provinces. Their homes had been looted and burnt, their women-folk openly violated. In spite of it, having been accused of political murder, their fate was believed to have been sealed. The whole of India was watching the issue with bated breath. If the Government insisted on sending these unfortunates, who had been more sinned against than sinning, to the gallows in the teeth of universal popular sentiment, all its professions of wishing to transfer power to India were, in Gandhiji's eyes, worth nothing. Gandhiji had consequently made the Government's attitude in the matter the acid test of British sincerity. He had explained all this to Bhulabhai. The dialogue naturally turned upon this issue. Gandhiji was afraid that the courts could not be depended upon to take an impartial view of the case. As he was at this time observing silence for the greater part of the day under medical advice, he wrote his observations on slips. He began: 'As Churchill (was it Pritt?) has said, the courts are not beyond political influence. This he said some years ago about Judge Granville over a heated political case involving judicial points. In my case (in South Africa) it was a franchise question. I lost because it was political. I had engaged Asquith.'

Rajaji asked him to suggest a *modus vivendi*. Gandhiji scribbled: 'If Colville (the Governor of Bombay) means it, he can say, "withdraw legal proceedings and exercise clemency." I have done all these things in South Africa once through Hertzog. Clemency has now a greater chance of success. Let us hope that Bhulabhai is on the *qui vive*. I don't mind if the examination is started.' Summing up the point of his difference with Rajaji he continued: 'I simply feel that we shall have to go through these things, if the rulers are bent on crushing us. The difference between you and me is not great, but it is vital though it seems small. You want, if you do, power at any price. I have put a limit

to the price to be paid. You think if you do that, nothing will come if we don't take power. I say I can afford to wait till it comes at my price, for I am making progress however slight it may be . . .'

Finally, he wrote: 'If you feel like talking about any other thing, I am prepared and will gladly set apart the time. I simply do not worry you for I have nothing to ask. Your presence gives me solace and strength. What more do I want? I understand you and you me.'

7

One of the last things that Rajaji entrusted to me was a delicate mission when he was Governor of Bengal. It was concerning the Governor's freedom to deal with his opposite number in Pakistan. In February 1947, when Gandhiji had gone from Noakhali first to Bihar and from there to Delhi—never to return—he had left me behind with some other members of his entourage to carry on his peace mission under Satish Chandra Das Gupta's overall direction. In the middle of November, however, he asked me to join him in Delhi. I talked over with Gandhiji the matter that Rajaji had mentioned to me. A few days later, Gandhiji took me to meet Lord Mountbatten and presented me to him. At the end he asked Lord Mountbatten to send for me and hear what I might have to tell him. In my next meeting with Lord Mountbatten, I discussed with him what Rajaji had told me, and then made my report to Rajaji on 29 January 1948 in a letter:

I had a talk with Bapu in regard to the matter you spoke to me about. It seems the granting of that latitude rests with the Governor-General, who in his turn must act on the advice of his Prime Minister. So I have asked Bapu to talk the matter over with Pandit Nehru. I discussed it with the Governor-General also. He, I fancy, will be quite agreeable. Probably he will talk it over with you during his forthcoming visit to Calcutta *en route* to Assam and Burma.

My letter to Rajaji continued: 'Bapu is O.K. in every respect. He is due to leave for Wardha on the 1st (February 1948) and expects to return on the 13th or 14th after observing Jamnalalji's death anniversary on the 12th at Wardha.' By a cruel irony of fate the next day Gandhiji was snatched away from us, leaving the whole nation orphaned. Rajaji poured out his grief in his next letter.

Your letter of 29th January was waiting for me to be read on the morning of 5th Feb. And in the interval Bapu who was 'O.K. in every respect' is gone. No personal correspondence ever has been more wickedly made pathetic than this letter of yours that was moving towards me just when the bullets were being directed towards our dear master's dear body.

Narasimhan read this letter when I had left Calcutta and sent a copy of it to me to Delhi which too missed me while I was there.

8

Full of years and honours, Rajaji lived to witness his ninety-third birth anniversary. As a patriot, who gave up at one stroke flourishing legal practice and thought nothing of spurning all the glittering prizes of life that could be his for the taking; as an ardent social reformer who took up the cause of prohibition, and, although born and brought up in an orthodox Vaishnava Brahmin family, as Chairman of the Salem Municipality dared to break the orthodox religious tradition of South India by posting Pariahas to operate the Brahmins' water taps, long before the Congress had adopted prohibition or the eradication of untouchability as its programme; as an administrator, who by his firm and tactful handling of the administrative machine won the respect and loyalty of the services on the one hand and deep appreciation and admiration from his English Governor, on the other; as a political leader, who scored one of the most spectacular victories at the 1937 Madras elections, and as Premier of Madras virtually wiped out the Justice Party, without incurring mortal enmities; as a successful Governor of the most difficult of provinces, Bengal; as the first Indian Governor-General of India after Independence; and as a writer of luminous prose that has a distinctiveness all its own, in Tamil; he had established a record which even if confined to anyone of these fields would have assured him a permanent niche in India's temple of fame. But if I were asked which was Rajaji's finest hour, I would unhesitatingly point to the period of his self-discovery following the launching of Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act by Gandhiji.

Rajaji attained his greatest height in the year following his discovery of Gandhiji and Gandhiji's discovery of him during the phase of satyagraha and non-cooperation that closed with the Mahatma's first arrest and imprisonment. It was then that the nascent incandescence of Rajaji's spirit, that dazzled and made him the idol of the youth, particularly the student

community of Madras, and swept even their elders, the intellectual elite, off their feet, was seen at its brightest. The scepticism and doubts that later assailed his spirit had not yet made their appearance. His pristine faith in the Master's philosophy of satyagraha and the Master's faith in him as a satyagrahi filled him with boundless self-confidence. The prospect of limitless horizons opened up by the new way of life shown by Gandhiji had fired his spirit. The serenity, the inner poise and the joy of self-discovery that filled this phase of his life are reflected in the tenderness and delicate humor of his two letters to Gandhiji from prison, after his incarceration in 1922: 'Three months' simple is too little, but if Swaraj is won by you earlier it makes no difference. I hope when I come back you will have finished the Swaraj work and got back to your normal occupation of research into dietetics.' In the next letter he wrote: '... I ... am completely shut out from all politics, news and newspapers. What an ideal condition which, I know, you are enjoying. The greatest common measure between thoughts, words, and what the jail authorities would allow, and what I need write to you at all, is but little. Your eyes would flow with delight if you saw me here in my solitary cell spinning—spinning not as a task imposed by a tyrant faddist, but with pleasure. Between spinning and beautiful *Ramayana* I have been spending practically the whole of the time left me by the agony of eating, washing of dishes, etc. The spinning wheel I have is a real beauty. It is a life companion and younger brother in my cell. This Ashram is very much less congested than yours at Sabarmati and I wish more people understood the real advantage of this retirement and discipline.'

9

Some have compared Rajaji to Chanakya, others to Hitler, still others have endearingly called him the Pussyfoot Johnson of India. It is true that no Gordian knot of diplomacy that Chanakya could ever devise could unnerve him. As an administrator he would stand no nonsense; an ex-civil-resister beyond compare, he would shrink from no measure, however stern, to curb abuses of liberty. In theory, at least, he could be as ruthless as Hitler. One of his *bon mots* that attained fame in the days before Independence was, 'We must begin our independence with a liberal measure of hangings to make it bear fruit.' As a prohibitionist

he was perhaps more successful in his region than Pussyfoot Johnson was in America. 'Sankaracharya' of South Indian politics would not be an inapt description of him as a political leader. Disparaging tongues have dubbed him 'the lost leader', which is utter nonsense, besides being puerile. He never bartered his principles for gain or expediency. The only figure with whom, to my mind, he could be appropriately compared is Bhishma—the dour, doughty warrior of the Mahabharata, with a relentless will and matchless self-abnegation, who thought nothing of making the greatest sacrifice that a man can be called upon for the sake of *dharma*; terrible in war, great in peacetime, a man deeply versed in the scriptures, who did not spare himself for not having kept, what the Buddha called the principle of 'right living'; the father-figure to whom came all—those to whom he had pledged his sword as well as those who had felt the edge of that sword, to gather wisdom from his aged lips as he lay on his bed of arrows, battle-scarred, bruised and battered but with mind unruffled and serene, awaiting the great call to the Valhalla of the brave. What tainted Bhishma's judgement was his eating of the salt of his unrighteous Kaurava masters. Non-violence, as Gandhiji pointed out, becomes tainted when it takes to power. It was the assumption of power that coloured Rajaji's judgement and opinions and he had willy-nilly to obey the dynamics of the machine of which he became a part. And whatever we do, our intellect, that hand-maid, rationalizes.

Rajaji had unbounded faith in the sovereignty of reason, an almost mystical faith in its omnipotence. Therein lies his strength as well as his weakness. For, as Gandhiji again and again pointed out, 'mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long. . . . Reason has to be strengthened by suffering . . . suffering opens up the eyes of understanding.' And suffering to be effective calls for a living faith, not in what may be contrary to reason, but what lies beyond reason. Rajaji would have considered it a libel on him if anybody said that he, the author of commentaries on the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*, lacked faith. He had genuine faith in the source of all things, but it was not the faith that

rejects the lore
Of nicely calculated, less or more.

It was faith synthesized in the laboratory of his intellect. It did not exclude trusting in God but required its votary to keep his powder dry; it would not permit him to take chances against all human arithmetic and dare to find all by losing all, as in the case of Gandhiji.

Non-violence with Rajaji was not the law of our being that it was to Gandhiji—the *activist force* in the world, comparable, say, to steam or electricity but infinitely more powerful. Gandhiji's faith in non-violence had grown out of his practice, which he tried afterwards to rationalize. His practice had preceded his theory and was in fact independent of any particular theory or system of thought. Rajaji's practice of non-violence had to follow rationalization and therefore could go only as far as the latter could keep pace with it. If it foundered, his practice of non-violence also had to come to a halt.

Similarly, when Rajaji spoke of *dharma*, he meant by it not what is inscribed at the core of our being, about which Tolstoy wrote that if Christ and his teaching had not existed he would have discovered the truth himself; not the *dharma* that the *Gita* speaks of as 'the Law Eternal' from which the Vedas and the shastras derive their sanctity as an expression of it, and about which Gandhiji said that if any shastra denied it, he would deny that shastra, but the dharma that rests on the authority of the shastra, precriptive dharma. There is much that is common to both. But there comes a point when the two bifurcate. So long as the two coincided no one could excel Rajaji as the *alter ego* of his Master; but when they bifurcated he parted company with the Master. This parting of company brought him nearer to Gandhiji as a satyagrahi than any mechanical conformity could have. That is why Gandhiji felt closer to him when Rajaji differed from and even opposed him, than he did to many a so-called 'follower'.

Allied to his faith in the all-conquering potency of reason was Rajaji's limitless faith in the weapon of diplomacy. He somehow believed that nothing was impossible for diplomacy in its best sense and at its best; but experience bears out that whatever else may be possible for diplomacy, one thing that it cannot do is to take the place of strength. It is our utter failure to recognize this that has been our bane ever since our leadership wearied of satyagraha after it had developed a taste for power and cried

'never again' after the Quit India struggle. Diplomacy makes possible the most effective deployment of the strength we have; but it can do no good whatever to the impotent. And the only way to generate strength is either to adopt the weapon of suffering or that of brute force. The latter we do not have, from the former we have turned away. With his abhorrence of the latter and growing scepticism in respect of the former, Rajaji's mind, ever since he parted company with Gandhiji, had moved in a strange, diagonal path. Some of his later acts and utterances, I must confess, I do not understand. But all this is like counting the spots on the sun. I fully recognize that my truth need not necessarily be Rajaji's and, as a satyagrahi, he must live by his truth as I must by mine. Rajaji had been the Bhishma Pitamaha of our era, and continued to inspire us and guide our faltering footsteps by his ripe wisdom and living example.

10

At four-score and thirteen Rajaji stood forth as a shining light of wisdom, a beacon-light in a raging storm, an embodiment of the values on which our non-violent struggle for freedom was built by Gandhiji and which alone can make independence bear the promised fruit. These consist of truth, honesty and sincerity in all walks of life—including the political renunciation, self-sacrifice and spotless personal purity.

Rajaji was more than an individual, he was an institution. I cannot think of Gandhiji or our non-violent freedom struggle apart from Rajaji. And this in spite of the fact that for well over three decades I have failed to see eye-to-eye with him on many matters where he and Gandhiji differed.

C.R. the man was greater than his opinions, greater than all the offices that he held in the Government or outside it; greater even than his record of political service and the part he played in our freedom struggle—second to none as they were in themselves.

Young at Eighty-Five

In his eighty-fifth year Bharata Bhushan Pandit Malaviyaji refused to remain confined to his sick bed and rushed to Delhi to watch the denouement of two centuries of British rule in India. In vain did Gandhiji and G. D. Birla try to dissuade this hero of a hundred fights from undertaking the journey. On reaching Delhi, he immediately wanted to see Gandhiji in Bhangi Nivas. But Gandhiji anticipated this by meeting Malaviyaji at 5 Canning Road, where the latter was staying, on the evening of 18 April. 'You would have covered me with shame if you had come to me instead of my going to you,' Gandhiji told Malaviyaji when they met.

Malaviyaji lay half reclining in bed, supported by a high pillow. At four score and five his mind was alert, the memory still functioning. His sight and hearing were good, but his physical energy was at a low ebb. His voice during the conversations scarcely rose above a whisper. Both Gandhiji and I strained our ears in vain to catch it till Govind Malaviyaji came to our rescue. The one passion that filled Bharat Bhushan's soul was the independence and integrity of India and on these points Gandhiji was able to allay his apprehensions. He had heard that a lot of people came and disturbed his peace by retailing all kinds of idle rumours. 'Why do you lend a ready ear to such gossip?' pleaded Gandhiji. 'Why can't you take a leaf out of my book? If someone comes to me and talks to me about the Indian States, I send him off to Pandit Nehru. If it is about the internal politics of the Congress, I give him Maulana Azad's address. In this way I have rigorously restricted my ambit of work. Even so, I have hardly a moment's respite. Unless I do that I would have to give up the desire to live up to 125, which I must not do if my dream of non-violence as a world-conquering force is to be realized. You are a man of religion and purity of soul. It should need no argument on my part to convince you that, if you

completely empty your mind of outward things and, fixing all your thoughts on Him inwardly, pray, you will have more than contributed your share to the struggle for independence. You must complete your century. It is perfectly feasible if you will listen to my advice.' Malaviyaji followed Gandhiji's remarks with an inscrutable child-like smile, his face beaming affection. What did the amused look signify? Was it to say, 'Oh, I have heard all that before', I wondered.

'I must not engage you in talk any further', Malaviyaji remarked; 'I know you are always busy', and sent Gandhiji away.

Before starting for Simla, Gandhiji revisited the super-octogenarian of Indian nationalism at Canning Road, to seek his blessings for his mission. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan accompanied him. It was Gandhiji's day of silence, being Monday, and he thus had to communicate only through writing. As before, Malaviyaji was reclining in bed. But he looked fresher than on the previous visit. In reply to Gandhiji's question as to what he proposed to do since the venue of the Cabinet Mission talks was to be shifted to Simla, Malaviyaji said he would be returning to Banaras. That relieved Gandhiji's anxiety, as he was half-afraid lest, in his irrepressible enthusiasm, this *enfant terrible* should decide to venture up to the heights of Simla. That would be courting disaster at his age and in his present state of health.

'How long are you to continue to worry over the country's affairs?' Gandhiji asked him, marvelling at Malaviyaji's perennial enthusiasm.

'So long as the country's affairs continue to cause worry', he replied with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

'Won't you leave something to a youth like myself?' scribbled Gandhiji on another slip of paper, and added, 'It will make me feel even younger.'

'This young man', replied Malaviyaji in an audible whisper, his eyes beaming at his visitor, 'is going to remain young for many a day yet.'

But Gandhiji was determined not to be put off so easily. As in the case of Gurudev, he was eager to take upon himself Malaviyaji's burdens too, if the latter would allow it.

'You can entrust any of your burdens to me', he told Malaviyaji, 'the only condition is that you must cease worrying and bless me with some of your strength.'

'The name of God is the strength of our strength', replied Malaviyaji.

'That is true. The recitation of Ramanam is there all the time. But from where shall I bring your learning? I am not flattering. I have neither your erudition nor your knowledge of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata's* lore.'

'But you have God's name which is the quintessence of all knowledge. Is it not?'

'That is true, but all the same I do feel jealous of your learning. You must get well and make use of all your learning to that end.'

'I will get well', replied Malaviyaji.

At this stage Pandit Radhakant (the eldest son of Malaviyaji) told Gandhiji that he had read out his article on Vanaspati ghee to his father, which had appeared in *Harijan* and it had pleased him immensely.

'It is a national menace, this spread of vegetable ghee on the one hand, and the slaughter of cows on the other. Between the two, the vitality of the people is being sapped. I feel so happy over what you have done and are doing for the milk supply', commented Malaviyaji.

Gandhiji agreed with him as regards the menace of vegetable ghee and added, 'My efforts to solve the milk problem, of course, continue, but success is not possible without the full co-operation of our commercial and trading class. But I must now take leave of you.'

Malaviyaji smiled his permission and blessings in reply, making *namaskars* at the same time. As Gandhiji rose from his seat Malaviyaji slowly recited the following verse:

Forget not yourself,
But continue to spread your fragrance wherever you are
Even like the rose.

That was Malaviyaji's way of blessing.

2

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was born in Allahabad on 25 December 1861 in a family of scholars. His forefathers came from the Malwa region of Central India, from which the name Malaviya was derived.

When one of the Rajas of Malwa did an injustice to the Panchgauda Brahmins, the sect to which the Malaviyas belonged, a group of Gauda Brahmins from the village of Korla (Kurahara) near Indore left Malwa in the winter of 1419 and migrated eastward. They first settled in Patna. As their families enlarged, they moved to other areas in search of a living. These Brahmins won public respect for their piety and learning wherever they settled. One Mishraji, a rich man, became such an ardent admirer of theirs that he brought a group of them to Prayag, where about 150 families of these migrant Brahmins are to be found. They produced many outstanding exponents of the Hindu scriptures and scholars of Sanskrit. One of the most notable among them was Pandit Chaturvedi Vishnu Prasad. His son, Pandit Premadhar, was a great Sanskrit scholar and a celebrated devotee of Lord Krishna. He had four sons, of whom the third, Pandit Brajnath, became a distinguished exponent of the *Bhagavata*. Pandit Brajnath lived on such offerings as were given to him spontaneously, so his family was brought up in poverty. Pandit Madan Mohan was the fifth child of Brajnath and his wife, Moonadevi.

Madan Mohan had his primary education in Hardeva Guruki Pathshala. Hardeva Guruji, a sanyasi, was a strict disciplinarian and laid great emphasis on proper dress, regular habits and purity of conduct, traits which became ingrained in Madan Mohan. After receiving his sacred thread at the age of 9, the boy began to recite the *Gayatri Mantra* and meditated for hours. The family was alarmed lest he should become a monk, and the boy also often accompanied his father when he went out to deliver religious discourses.

Madan Mohan wanted to go to an English school, but the family was too poor to afford that. But seeing his son's keenness to study, Brajnath had him admitted to the Allahabad Zila School. His mother pawned her bangles each month to pay the fees on time and received them back when Brajnath replenished the money from his meagre resources. A family friend promised Madan Mohan one rupee a month which was of some help, but it was not enough.

The family was large and the house too small for the boy to study in it in peace. He would pick up his books and a hurricane lantern every evening and go to the house of a classmate and

neighbour, Ganga Prasad, to study. He was a brilliant student and excelled his classmates in English pronunciation and handwriting. He could sing well and was a very good *sitar* player. He also took part in wrestling bouts and retained an interest in physical exercise all his life. But he was weak in Mathematics and had to work hard to make up the deficiency. Madan Mohan passed his school examination, which was then conducted by Calcutta University, and was encouraged by his father to join Muir Central College in spite of the serious financial stringency. Principal Harrison was much impressed by Madan Mohan's qualities of head and heart and took a great interest in his progress. College gave an opportunity to Madan Mohan to develop his organizing talents and debating ability. He passed his B.A. from Agra in 1884, and took a teaching job in his old school at his mother's behest.

By his character, learning and sympathetic behaviour towards his pupils, Madan Mohan soon won their love, admiration and respect. Those who had the good fortune of being his pupils remained his ardent admirers all their lives. It was during his college-days that the idea of building a great university where all branches of learning would be taught came to his mind. It grew and became a passion with him.

A social service association called the Hindu Samaj was founded in 1880 at Prayag. Madan Mohan was an active worker of the Samaj. It became so active that it was decided to extend its activities to the whole country. The inaugural meeting was held in the palace of the Maharaja of Banaras at Prayag. It was attended by Hindu leaders from all over India. Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakanker was much impressed by Madan Mohan at this meeting.

In 1886 Malaviyaji attended the Calcutta Congress and addressed it. His performance made him known all over India. Raja Rampal Singh was also there. He had just come back from England and offered Rs 200 a month to Malaviyaji to edit the *Hindustan* weekly and make it a daily newspaper. Malaviyaji agreed on condition that the Raja Saheb would never call him after he had taken a drink.

Malaviyaji made a great success of the *Hindustan*. He considered journalism an art and was a fastidious proof-reader. He never deviated from the policy of the paper and set up very high

standards of journalism. Malaviyaji edited *Hindustan* for two and a half years. Then he left it because the Raja sent for him one day to consult him on some urgent problem after he had had a drink. The Raja tried to persuade Malaviyaji to stay on, but when he failed, he suggested that Malaviyaji might study law. The Raja offered to pay all his expenses. Malaviyaji promised to consider his suggestion and came home. He was immediately offered the co-editorship of *Indian Opinion*, an English paper with the reputation of being bold and fearless. Malaviyaji accepted this and his association with the paper enhanced its reputation.

The cause dearest to his heart however was the establishment of a Hindu university on the banks of the Ganga. In order to propagate the idea, he set up a Hindi weekly, *Abhyudaya*, in 1907 and edited it himself for two years. The boldness and outspokenness of *Abhyudaya* often brought it into conflict with the British Government. He himself started and was also associated with several other journals. His friends who had seen his ability at the Calcutta Congress wanted Malaviyaji to take more interest in politics and to that end study law. He thus started his law studies during the co-editorship of *Indian Opinion*. He wrote a comprehensive note on constitutional law which showed his ability to master a most difficult branch of law. But he was beset by family problems, and his brother fell ill and died at this stage. Even so, Malaviyaji passed his law examination in 1891 with credit.

Malaviyaji quickly made a mark as a promising member of the bar. He began to shine as a brilliant advocate. It was Malaviyaji who brought Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to Allahabad and started him on his career. Malaviyaji's three attributes which ensured him success as a lawyer were thorough preparation of his brief, effective speech, and the art of putting his case persuasively.

But success as a lawyer and earning money was not enough for him. His passion to set up a truly Indian university was far stronger. His father told him that if he was serious about it, he should give up the practice of law and he did so, without caring for the monetary loss. Gopal Krishna Gokhale quoted Malaviyaji's example with great admiration and said: 'Why do you call me a great sacrificer? What sacrifice have I made? I was born in a poor family and became a teacher. From teachership I rose to my present status. I was a poor man and so remain to this day.

The sacrifice is that of Pandit Malaviya. He was born in poverty and from poverty rose to the position of an eminent lawyer earning thousands of rupees each month. He tasted riches and when the call came to him from within to serve his motherland, he sacrificed all and again courted poverty. His sacrifice is the real sacrifice, not mine.'

The lawyer in Malaviyaji however lay dormant. The Chauri Chaura tragedy resulted in 225 persons being arrested on charges of arson and murder. The Sessions Judge at Gorakhpur had sentenced 175 out of the 225 to capital punishment. The case came up for hearing before the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court. No local lawyer was prepared to defend the 225 accused. All eyes turned to Malaviyaji. He took up the case though he had given up legal practice for two decades. He prepared the brief and pleaded the case of the accused. He concluded his arguments with a fervent appeal to the judges to 'impart justice tempered with mercy' and thanked them for giving him a patient hearing.

The Chief Justice rose from his seat when Malaviyaji had finished, and said to him: 'The wonderful ability with which you have pleaded this case has earned you the gratitude of all the accused, and their families shall ever remain grateful to you for the same. I on behalf of myself and I believe on behalf of my colleague Mr Justice Pigot also, congratulate you on arguing out this case in such a brilliant manner. Nobody else could have presented this case better than yourself. No better laurels can a lawyer aspire for in his legal career than this.'

One hundred and fifty of the accused were saved from the gallows.

3

Malaviyaji was an orthodox, staunch Hindu. It pained him to see the younger generation of Hindus knowing so little about their great religion. He met some of the leaders in a conference of Hindu divines at Hardwar in the spring of 1887, where Col. Olcott of the Theosophical Society was also present. He set the tone by calling upon the Hindu leaders present to 'search for the extinguished spark of your religion and rekindle it'. The conference decided to establish the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal to propagate the basic values of Hinduism.

Malaviyaji set up organizations to take the work forward. He also set up service organizations like Seva Samities and Mahavirdals, to serve pilgrims and render social service at the Kumbha Mela and other festivals, as well as at other times of need. Later, he set up a scout organization.

Malaviyaji wrote *Hindu Dharmopadesh*, a small book, which laid down what would be an ideal life for every member of Hindu society, and at the same time stressing tolerance towards other religions and also patriotism. Malaviyaji was ahead of Gandhiji in pleading for the mitigation of the hardships of untouchables. He appealed to caste Hindus to give Harijans facilities for education in public schools and to draw water from public wells.

Malaviyaji's love for the cow was great: he kept cows, looked after them well and enjoyed watching the frolicking calves. All those working for cow protection by opening *goshalas* or securing grazing grounds had his support. He gave up using leather shoes when he learnt that young calves and pregnant cows were slaughtered to get soft leather to make soft shoes. He considered dairy farming a part of Indian culture and cow protection. The Cow Protection League of Calcutta was set up in 1908 with Sir Asutosh Mukherjee as its President. The movement for cow protection gained great momentum in the early years of the twentieth century.

Like Lokmanya Tilak Malaviyaji believed that social reform comes from within society and should not be thrust from outside. This, he felt, would preserve the unity and solidarity of the society. He also espoused the cause of Hindi through Hindi journalism and in other ways. He wanted to see Hindi established as the national language of India.

4

Malaviyaji went round with a beggar's bowl to collect funds for Banaras Hindu University. Princes and zamindars helped him and so did the common people. The Indian princes never denied him a cheque whenever he approached them. As a unitary university, it is not surprising that Banaras Hindu University (now renamed Kashi Vishwavidyalaya) is the biggest of its kind, with over 30,000 students under it. Voluntary donations dried up once the mesmerizing presence of Malaviyaji

disappeared from the scene. Later, the University became a central university, and, like Aligarh Muslim University, is supported by central funds.

Gandhiji too was a great collector of funds, but he collected from the common people. He was particular about the correct handling of the funds. In Tilak Swaraj Fund he had noticed that the collections made by hundreds of enthusiasts all over the country did not always reach the central office, partly because the collectors did not keep strict accounts of receipts and never followed rigidly the rules regarding permissible incidental expenses, or that they had been lax in handing over the collections promptly to the nearest regional centre. As a result, many leakages were noticed. More than the poor and indigent, it was the comparatively higher echelons of the cadre who failed to render accounts scrupulously. Gandhiji thereafter became very strict about these matters.

In the case of Malaviyaji's collections for the university, too, this phenomenon of leakage existed. The charge was that some members close to him would freely draw upon the funds. Having spent the sums, when brought before Malaviyaji for chastisement and punishment, their tears would melt Malaviyaji's soft heart and they would be forgiven. This only encouraged irresponsible behaviour on the part of those who had little regard for the sanctity of public funds.

In 1911 the Hindu University Society was formally registered. The Secretary of State for India gave his assent on Lord Hardinge's advice to establish a residential university at Banaras. Mrs Annie Besant and the trustees of Central Hindu College, in the same city, graciously handed over Central Hindu College to the Society to form the nucleus of the university. The foundation stone of the university was laid by Lord Hardinge on Vasant Panchami day, 4 February 1916, in the presence of an august and colourful assembly of princes, governors and leading public figures from within the country and abroad. Lord Hardinge said in his speech:

This foundation stone will mark a definite step in the advance towards an ideal that has stirred to its very depth the imagination of India. It betokens a new departure in the history of education in India and has attracted the most intense interest on the part of all good and thoughtful Hindus.

This University is going to do something more than merely increase the existing facilities. Though in ancient India there was nothing quite like a

modern university, its prototype may be dimly discerned in the far distant past. The tradition that comes down to us is one of thousands of students gathered round such great teachers as Vasishta and Gautama. Indeed, the whole Indian idea of education is wrapped up in the conception of a group of pupils surrounding their Guru in loving reverence and not only imbibing the words of wisdom that fell from his lips, but also looking up to him for guidance in religion and moulding their character in accordance with their precept and example.

At the inauguration a meeting was called at Kashi Naresh Hall, to which all the celebrities were invited, along with Gandhiji. Malaviyaji was in the chair. He let Gandhiji have his say, but many got up and left the meeting as they felt that what Gandhiji was saying amounted to disloyalty towards the British Government. Gandhiji told the princes to give away their jewellery to the poor. He told the youth of the nation not to throw bombs secretly, but do whatever they wanted to do openly. He called upon the rulers not to be afraid but mix with the people. There was such confusion in the audience that Malaviyaji ultimately stood up with folded hands, and Gandhiji stopped speaking.

Malaviyaji collected the best brains from all over the country to teach at Banaras University and thus gave a good start to it. He was its first Vice-Chancellor. Many outstanding Indians, including Dr S. Radhakrishnan, later occupied prestigious chairs on the staff or in the administration of the university. The first batch of students of the university took their examination in 1918.

5

In 1919 came great upheavals following the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh massacre. In 1920 Tilak died. The leadership of the Congress now devolved on Gandhiji, and the national movement for Swaraj was intensified. Malaviyaji remained a moderate leader, though he was fearless. He toured all over India and criticized the British policy of repression and suppression; he took part in the inquiry that was set up and forcefully pleaded for justice to India before the public and in the Legislature. But he did not approve of the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1921, believing that it was not consistent with Indian culture. The Prince of Wales was a guest and Indian culture always honoured a guest. He gave the Prince

a reception and conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate at Banaras Hindu University, for which he was criticized by many.

However, Malaviyaji led the procession against the Simon Commission with Lala Lajpat Rai in Lahore, when the latter was badly beaten up by the police while leading the procession. It resulted in his tragic and untimely death a couple of weeks later. Malaviyaji did not support Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement in the twenties because he felt the people were not ready for it. Chauri Chaura perhaps justified his attitude. We have already seen how he defended the Chauri Chaura accused and saved the lives of 150 of them. After the Salt Satyagraha in early thirties he was instrumental in bringing about the Gandhi-Irwin Pact with the help of Sapru and Jayakar. He went to the second Round Table Conference in London and supported Gandhiji, who was the sole representative of the Congress, in everything.

When many Banaras Hindu University students joined the Quit India movement, Malaviyaji did not approve of this. He was deeply pained to learn that a Government force entered the University, broke open the locks and doors of the University building and drove out students from the hostels. Even women students were thrown out. Supported by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Radhakrishnan, Malaviyaji challenged the British Government, but he was too infirm by then to move about and resist them. Malaviyaji took up the cause of the release of Gandhiji and other national leaders after Gandhiji sent his reply to the Government's charge-sheet, denying accusations against him.

Malaviyaji was most anxious to see India free and he wanted a united India. The preceding note by Pyarelalji gives us a glimpse into his mind in this regard as also the relationship between the two—Gandhiji and Malaviyaji.

6

When Malaviyaji was Editor of *Hindustan*, some of his friends had advised him to contest for the Municipal Councillorship in Allahabad. The Councillorship had been the monopoly of the rich till then, and they spent a great deal on the elections. Malaviyaji contested on the basis of his public service and his convictions, but he lost. Undaunted, he continued to serve the people with redoubled vigour. The result was that when he contested the next time, he was elected with an overwhelming

majority. His keenness to improve civic services led to his being elected the senior Vice-President of the Municipal Committee.

When an epidemic of plague broke out about that time, the rich left for safer places and the poor remained to fend for themselves. Malaviyaji visited every home without caring for his own safety, made arrangements for removal of the sick to hospitals and arranged for the last rites of the dead. He also saw to the disinfection of homes with plague cases. He set up a camp outside the city to provide shelter for those who required it. Such selfless service was highly appreciated.

Many of Malaviyaji's friends wanted him to enter the U.P. Legislature. Pandit Vishwambhar Nath of Allahabad was a nominated member in the U.P. Legislative Council; Malaviyaji greatly respected him and would not consider taking his place. After the Pandit's death, the Government nominated Malaviyaji in his place; unlike the other nominated members, Malaviyaji never supported the Government over matters he did not approve of. In the very first year of his nomination, he strongly opposed the Bundelkhand Alienation of Land Bill, 1903. In his budget speeches in 1906 and 1907 he pleaded for more funds for education. He pleaded for the organizing of the police force in a more systematic and effective way, for giving more responsible positions to Indians in the services and for holding the Indian Civil Service examination in India.

He was re-elected to the U.P. Legislative Council under the new Indian Councils Act of 1909. Under this it was provided that two members would be returned from the Provincial Legislative Council to the Imperial Council (Viceroy's Council). Malaviyaji was one of the two in the very first instance. He made a forceful speech on the Press Act, opposed the Rowlatt Bills and made a powerful plea for the compulsory education for all children. He also made a most moving speech for the abolition of the indentured labour system which was semi-slavery. Malaviyaji remained a member of the Imperial Council till 1920. His speeches on the Salt Tax, Exchange Ratio, Gold Standard and Tariff Bill were particularly important.

The motto of Malaviyaji's Seva Samitis was the following favourite verse of Gandhiji:

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं, न स्वर्गं न पुनर्भवम्
कामये दुःखं तप्तानां, प्राणिनां मार्तिनाशनम् ॥

‘I do not aspire for kingdom nor heaven, nor liberation. I only yearn to be able to remove the sufferings of those in distress.’

In 1921 the Moplas of Malabar attacked and plundered some Hindu homes. The Government took strong measures to suppress them and a number of Moplas were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Gandhiji asked Malaviyaji to render help to their families, along with those of the affected Hindus. Malaviyaji wrote back to Gandhiji: ‘This will be done, because good done in return to the good done to one, is of no great value. But the real magnanimity lies in doing good to one who has done one harm. This is the essence of the Hindu Dharma.’

Though forgiving by nature, Malaviyaji was intolerant of unfair criticism. Whenever he did not approve of something, he was frank in saying so. But one never saw him ‘raising the pitch of his voice or losing his temper’. He was always courteous, even to his critics and detractors.

In a leading article in *Abhyudaya* he once wrote: ‘India is not a country of the Hindus only. It is a country of the Muslims, the Christians and the Parsees too. The country can gain strength and develop itself only when the people of different communities of India live in mutual goodwill and harmony. Those who disrupt this unity are enemies of their country and their community alike.’ He was liberal and tolerant towards other religions. His motto in this context was, ‘One should have staunch faith in his religion, but he should not censure other religions; he should be indifferent to differences of opinion and have friendship for all living beings.’

Once a poet came to Malaviyaji and recited some verses in his praise. Malaviyaji at once stopped him and said, ‘Your fine composition is of no use to me for I cannot recite it before anybody. If you can recite any poem on God, Dharma or country, I shall find pleasure in quoting it before others.’

Gandhiji has spoken of Malaviyaji in his own, typical way. He said, ‘When I came back to my country to work here, I first went to Lokamanya Tilak. I found him as lofty as the Himalayas. I thought that it was not possible for me to climb up that

unscalable height. I then went to Shri Gokhale. He appeared to me like the deep ocean. I found that it was not possible for me to enter so deep. So I came back. Lastly I approached Malaviyaji. He seemed to me as crystal like as the stream and I decided to have ablutions in the sacred stream.' He wrote later, 'I have the privilege of knowing Malaviyaji since my return to India in 1915. I have had the privilege of closest communion with him. I regard him one of the best among Hindus who though orthodox holds most liberal view. He is incapable of jealousy of anyone. And what he has, is due to a long period of unbroken service of the motherland, such as very few of us can boast.'

The well-known editor of the *Leader*, published from Allahabad, C. Y. Chintamani, referring to Malaviyaji's compassion, observed: 'He was heart and head from head to feet.' Writing further about Malaviyaji, C. Y. Chintamani said, 'Today among India's public men Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji's place is second only to that of Mahatma Gandhi and he is the one man fit to be bracketed with the sage of Sabarmati.' At the time of Malaviyaji's centenary celebration at Allahabad in 1961 Jawaharlal Nehru said:

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, or Malaviyaji as many of us knew him, was a giant in the political and cultural fields of India at a time of the growth of our great national movement. Those of us who grew up in Allahabad and came into intimate contact with him received a powerful inspiration from that great personality. In the exuberance of our youth, we sometimes thought that he was a little too moderate according to our thinking. But there can be no doubt of the tremendous services he did to our country and of the powerful effect he had on the innumerable people who were influenced by him. It is fit and proper that we should pay homage to this great man who played such an important part in laying the foundation of India as we know her.

SUSHILA NAYAR

Pandit Motilalji As I Knew Him

A lion's mien and manner, patrician pride and a kingliness of bearing—this was my impression of Pandit Motilal Nehru, when I was presented to him in 1920.

It was in Lucknow. Gandhiji had gone there to attend a conference of Indian Muslims. I had accompanied him as a member of his entourage. I had given up formal studies in response to the call of non-cooperation on the eve of my Master of Arts examination and joined Gandhiji in his Ashram at Sabarmati. Asked for a sample of my writing, I had turned out a piece, which he had published with an appreciative note in his paper. It was as the writer of this article that he presented me to the Pandit.

Motilalji was dressed in *dhoti* and *kurta* and a waistcoat of dazzlingly white, speckless khadi, looking more kingly than ever in his simple but elegant dress. With an approving nod and a gracious smile he complimented me, 'That was extremely well done'. It was the kind of smile to win from the general for which soldiers are known to have joyously hurled themselves into the jaws of death. I was thrilled. A greenhorn fresh from college, I had never expected such honour.

Motilalji's name had already become a legend—we had heard of his feats of forensic genius, his exacting standards of excellence, his imperious nature, as easily moved to generosity as to anger, and last but not least, his princely way of living.

However, it was not till I had seen an album of his photographs in Anand Bhawan that I fully realized the contrast between Pandit Motilal Nehru of the pre-non-cooperation and the post-non-cooperation era. I remember particularly one of these photographs wherein he looks a Beau Brummell all over. It was I think taken at the time of King George V's *darbar* in Delhi, in the dress which he wore when presented to the King on that occasion. This, too, I subsequently learnt, went along with piles

of costly velvets, silks and satins into the bonfire a few months later, when the fabulous wardrobes of Anand Bhawan were emptied of all foreign cloth in response to the Congress's appeal for the boycott of foreign cloth.

It was characteristic of him—the way in which he threw himself with his whole family into the non-violent freedom struggle. Hard as diamond, he never allowed himself to be carried away merely by sentiment. He weighed carefully and long the pros and cons of a proposition before he committed himself to it. But once a decision was taken, there was no looking back. The transformation following the plunge into the non-cooperation movement went to the very core of his being. But he took to the new life as naturally as a fish takes to water. One of his letters to Gandhiji written in the following year reveals the zest and abandon with which he went about his business.

He had gone with his family for a change and a spell of rest to Mussoorie in between bouts of breathless exertion which had brought on an attack of coughing and asthma. He wrote to Gandhiji:

You will be interested to know the kind of life I am leading here. In the good(?) old days, two kitchen establishments—one English and the other Indian—accompanied me in the hills. After Chhota Hazri in camp, we would start off for the jungle with a full equipment of rifles, shot guns and ammunition, and on occasions with quite a little army of beaters, and killed such innocent creatures as came in our way till late in the afternoon—lunch and tea being served in the jungle with as much punctilious care as at home. A hearty dinner awaited our return to camp, and after doing full justice to it we slept the sleep of the just! There was nothing to disturb the even tenor of life except occasional annoyance at a stupid miss which saved the life of some poor beast. And now—the brass cooker . . . has taken the place of the two kitchens, a solitary servant, not over-intelligent, that of the old retinue—three small bags containing rice, *dal* and *masala* that of the mule loads of provisions (I shall never excuse Kamala for making these bags of *bideshi* cloth instead of Khadi)—one square meal of rice, *dal*, vegetables, sometimes *khbir* (milk and rice cooked together) in the middle of the day, that of breakfast, lunch and dinner al'Anglaise, lots of fruit with morning and afternoon tea and an occasional egg or two when available. The Shikar has given place to long walks and the rifles and guns to books, magazines and newspapers (the favourite book being Edwin Arnold's 'Song Celestial' which is now undergoing a third reading). When it rains hard, as it is doing now, there is nothing but to write silly letters like this. 'What a fall, my countrymen!' But, really, I have never enjoyed life better.

In December that year, when Devadas Gandhi and I were sent by Gandhiji to Allahabad to run the unlicensed *Manuscript Independent*, we stayed with Mahadev Desai in the main building of Anand Bhawan. We had been allotted two rooms, a bathroom and a kitchen. Mahadev and Devadas's arrest followed not long after. I was left alone to continue the undertaking.

Both father and son were then in prison. The Non-cooperation movement was in full swing. The thoroughness of the boycott of the official visit of the Prince of Wales in Calcutta had thrown Government into a panic and it had turned upon Congressmen its full machinery of repression. That only raised the pitch and tempo of the struggle.

On 1 February 1922, Gandhiji issued his famous ultimatum to the Viceroy. The no-tax campaign in Bardoli was to begin at the expiry of the week. On this day Pandit Motilal Nehru and other political prisoners in Lucknow jail had devoted themselves to spinning. As Gandhiji had made spinning a necessary qualification for participation in civil disobedience, Pandit Motilal Nehru, whose whole life was built on the twin principles of absolute integrity and discipline, had in anticipation made himself an adept in the art. When, on account of the Chauri Chaura outrage instead of the no-tax campaign, news came of the suspension *sine die* of civil disobedience, Motilalji's shock can be better imagined than described. As one accustomed to weighing every such issue in terms of political results, he gave full expression to his feelings in a letter to Gandhiji from prison. Gandhiji was not altogether unprepared for this.

In March 1922, Pandit Jawaharlal was released, but before long he was again clapped into prison for picketing the shops of the cloth dealers who had backed out of the pledge not to deal in foreign cloth that they had given in pursuance of the Congress programme to boycott foreign cloth. The pickets were removed when the cloth dealers paid a fine imposed for the breach of their pledge and gave an undertaking not to do so again. For this he was tried and sentenced to imprisonment on charges of intimidation to prevent them from pursuing their lawful avocation, and extortion. The public prosecutor argued that the posting of pickets and their withdrawal on payment of the penalty for the alleged breach of a pledge constituted a composite act amounting to intimidation with a view to extortion.

Pandit Motilal Nehru was furious when he heard this. On coming out of prison he announced in a public meeting that he would do the very thing for which Jawaharlal had been prosecuted and sentenced. He went on to add with his characteristic legal acumen and habitual caution, whether the pickets would be removed if the cloth dealers, who had imported foreign cloth, gave a fresh undertaking never to do so again and paid a penalty for what they had done. 'Subject to this,' he concluded rising to a peroration, 'I declare that I shall picket, I shall picket, I shall picket.' And with that he invited the Government to prosecute him for the offence, if it was held to be an offence to picket foreign cloth shops in order to dissuade the people from purchasing foreign cloth. Needless to say, the Government did not touch him.

2

In the weeks following this it was a rare privilege to live under Motilalji's roof as a member of his family and to come in intimate touch with his rich, many-sided personality. One of the first things he did on arriving in Anand Bhawan from prison was to send for me and my colleagues, Lalji Mehrotra, later our Ambassador in Tokyo. Giving us a warm, fatherly hug, he intimately inquired from us about the running of the *Manuscript Independent* that we were bringing out, and from me about the arrangements that had been made for my stay in Anand Bhawan, till he was satisfied that everything was quite satisfactory. In Devadas Gandhi he continued to take a paternal interest. Inviting him to assist him in his political work, some years later, he wrote, 'Come, I shall make a man of you and give you a training for which you will be grateful for life.' Hard as nuts, giving no quarter and expecting none in political combat, and in argument unemotional and cold as granite, in personal relations he showed a kindness of feeling which made for permanent attachments when once he took anybody to heart.

Among his multifarious interests was homeopathy. With a childlike naivete he explained to us the principles of his science—tolerance, potencies, idiosyncrasies and what not. He was then trying to work out a prescription for Pandit Jawaharlal, who was at that time having trouble with piles. Obviously he had great faith in homeopathy and, as always, in himself.

No believer in asceticism or self-mortification, he was an embodiment of the Epicurean principle of moderation, self-discipline and balance unaffected by any circumstance. He enjoyed good living but abhorred softness. He was as careful about his morning exercise as about his mid-day nap. Even when he was not a teetotaller, he once wrote to Gandhiji that he practised complete abstention from all alcoholic drinks for one month in the year as a measure of self-discipline. He was too proud to let any habit of his have the whiphand over him.

A more charming conversationalist and *raconteur* I have yet to come across. It was a treat every evening to sit in his *'durbar* and give oneself up to the smooth flow of his conversation, rich in mellowed wisdom, engaging anecdotes and experiences, varied sometimes by shrewd and caustic comments on opponents and things that had displeased him.

One incident of his legal practice he used to relate with great gusto. Motilalji was engaged as a counsel by the son of the Diwan of Dumraon. The Diwan, while in Burma on behalf of the Raja Saheb of Dumraon, had purchased a property for himself. The Raja Saheb claimed the property and persuaded another Raja to give evidence to the effect that the Diwan had told him that he had purchased the property in question on behalf of the Raja Saheb of Dumraon.

Earlier, the son of the Diwan had asked another Raja, who was an acquaintance of his father, if he knew anything about the transaction in question. The Raja Saheb told him that he had no recollection of it whatsoever. 'Would you mind giving me this in writing?' the Diwan's son asked him. The Raja Saheb had no objection and put it in a letter addressed to the Diwan's son. This document, however, could not be found when Motilalji needed it in connection with the case. When the case came up for hearing, the Raja appeared as a witness for the Dumraon Raj and deposed that both the Raja of Dumraon and his Diwan had told him that the property in question had been purchased on behalf of the Raja of Dumraon. Motilalji thereupon asked his client to provide him with just an envelope bearing the monogram of the deposing Raja. Putting that in his coat pocket with the Raja's monogram prominently exposed, so as to catch his eye, he began his cross-examination. The deposing Raja became nervous. Later, in the cross-examination, Motilalji asked him

whether he had a clear and definite recollection that the Raja of Dumraon and the Diwan's son had told him what he had stated in his evidence, or whether it was just his impression. The Raja fumbled and said it was only his impression.

Down came Motilalji upon him: 'Have you had any correspondence in this connection?'

'I do not remember.'

Did you earlier in a letter to the Diwan's son write that you had no information whatsoever concerning this matter?'

'I do not remember.'

Motilalji finally asked: 'In case you found that you had in a letter (striking, as if casually, with his hand the monogrammed envelope in his coat pocket) written that you had no information whatever concerning this transaction, would you revise the statement you have made before the Court?'

Utterly confused, the witness began to wobble.

That was enough. Motilalji closed his cross-examination. The witness's evidence had been rendered valueless in the Court's eye.

During an interval in the Court proceedings, the Raja of Dumraon met Motilalji and the case was settled out of court, just as Motilalji had planned.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya used to tell us that in his younger days Motilalji was fond of wrestling, and one of the persons he loved to wrestle with was Malaviyaji himself. Whether it was his early training in wrestling or whether it was his innate leonine nature that gave him his lust for combat, once it was aroused he went for his political kill like the king of the forest, goring and mauling the opponent who had incurred his ire, till there was nothing left of him. In stinging invective he could easily out-Churchill Churchill. I was witness to one such performance of his when, in the course of a public speech after his release in 1922, he flayed alive the liberals who were 'so liberal with their principles that they were left with hardly any principles at all' and the independents 'who were so independent of discipline and of one another as to be undependable'; and the titled and landed gentry who 'skimmed, slithered and performed acrobatics in the backwaters of reaction like water insects in the stink and stagnation of a village tank'. The statements issued by

the Publicity Department of the Government of India that the Indian political situation was normal in every respect was likened to a doomed patient's vain attempts at self-cure by the practice of Dr Coue's method of auto-suggestion ('Every day, in every way I am getting better and better and better'). His description later of a prominent responsivist dissident in the Swaraj Party as a 'diseased limb that would have to be amputated', is but too well known.

He laboured for the people but he was not of them. They gave him their respect, but to 'Jawahar' they gave their love. One could be intimate with Motilalji, but not familiar. He never suffered a fool gladly and nobody could dare to play any tricks with him. When once a prominent Anglo-Indian daily of Bombay, using the fable of the iguana lizard, insinuated that he had utilized his political services to the Tatas to replenish the funds of the Swaraj Party, he promptly sent for publication in that paper a letter to the editor to the effect that the offender was vastly mistaken if he thought that the Pandit's non-cooperation would save him from 'political black-mail'. Unless the insinuation was publicly withdrawn, there would be libel proceedings. A retraction of the offending remarks appeared in the very next issue of the paper.

Sometime before his release, the police arrived one day at Anand Bhawan with distress warrants for the realization of a fine—I forget on whom, the father or the son—which formed a part of their sentence and which they had refused to pay. Motilalji had already sent strict instructions that every facility was to be given to the police to take away whatever they liked in execution of the warrants; no attempt should be made to put away or hide anything from them. They came about mid-day and departed with a cartload of luxuriously upholstered sofas, easy chairs and other pieces of expensive furniture—brand new and freshly purchased, some with even their bills yet unpaid—besides Motilalji's favourite sporting guns and pistols, to be auctioned for a song. Motilalji did not shed a tear over this and refused even to hear protests when he came out, though he felt the loss of his favourite arms keenly.

Shortly after his release, during a visit to Lucknow jail where Pandit Motilalji and family had gone to have an interview with Pandit Jawaharlalji, we learnt some interesting details about

Motilalji's prison life. He was the uncrowned king inside the prison as he had been outside. Everyday, civil resisters were brought to the prison by the bus-load. Before the previous lot was accommodated a fresh lot would arrive. The jail was crowded far beyond capacity. There was trouble at the tally, when the prisoners arrived, because not unoften clerks in Government offices returning home, and students on their way to or back from schools and colleges, would, in their eagerness to court arrest, board the police vans taking civil resisters to prison. The prison officials were hard put to maintain discipline and enforce jail rules. Frequently they had to seek and got Pandit Motilalji's help. The European Superintendent—I think Clement was his name—would at the end of the day come to him with a long face, Motilalji recalled, and complain, 'Look, the whole government of the prison is slipping out of my hands'. Motilalji would tell him, 'One fine morning, my friend, you will find that the government of the country also has slipped out of your hands.'

3

In 1924, Gandhiji was suddenly released from prison after his operation for appendicitis. Pandit Motilal Nehru and Desha-bandhu C. R. Das had by then already formed the Swaraj Party, with the programme of entering the councils to carry on non-cooperation from within; and the tussle between the Swarajists, known as 'pro-changers', and the 'non-changers'—those who were in favour of adhering to the non-cooperation programme as originally laid down by Gandhiji—was at its height. There were long conferences between the Swarajist leaders and Gandhiji at Juhu, where Gandhiji was convalescing, about the political programme to be followed. Motilalji frankly told Gandhiji that his mind was made up. Rather than resume the programme of the triple boycott, he for one would retire to a *kutiya* (thatched hut) on the bank of the Ganges. What followed is perhaps without a parallel in the history of political struggles. Gandhiji, while telling the Swarajists that he was certain that their programme would not lead to India's independence, and that it would one day come tumbling down over their heads like a 'house of cards', also made it clear that he had not the slightest desire to obstruct those who differed from him and could not be persuaded to accept his point of view. They were all men of

integrity and their love of the motherland was not less than his. He was sure, he said, that if they all put the cause first and themselves last they would in the end arrive at the same goal.

As was his wont, Gandhiji straightaway set about to put this into practice in his own case. In order to avoid a tussle for power in the Congress between pro-changers and no-changers he proposed that the Swarajists should as Congressmen be freed to carry on their council-entry work without obstruction from the no-changers, but the Congress Executive should be manned only by those who believed in its full programme of non-cooperation. In the alternative, he offered to let the Congress organization be manned by Swarajists alone and to form an independent organization outside the Congress for himself to work out his programme. 'I am sharing with you my whole soul', he wrote in a letter to Motilalji Nehru. 'The more I think the more my soul rises against a battle for power. . . . But I do not want to be mixed up with the Council's programme. This can only happen by Swarajists manning the Congress or their not acting upon the Congress. I am quite willing to follow whichever course commends itself to you. . . . With me in the Congress the Councils etc. should remain out of it. Then I can assist you. Or with them in the Congress I must be practically out of it. I would then gladly occupy the place I did from 1915 to 1918. My purpose is not to weaken the power of the Swarajists—certainly not to embarrass them. Show me the way and I shall try my best to suit you.'

But the lava of the 'pro-change-no-change' controversy was still hot under the feet. People had been touched on the raw. Gandhiji's proposal was received as a clever political manoeuvre. The Swarajists expected, Pandit Motilal told Gandhiji, to obtain the country's verdict in their favour before long and thus give a quietus to the controversy. Merely handing over the machinery by one party to the other by agreement without any such verdict was not acceptable to them. So far as Gandhiji's retirement from the Congress was concerned, Motilalji's attitude seemed to be that he was not prepared to subsist on anybody's generosity, not even the Mahatma's.

Gandhiji's heart was sick of the domestic wrangle. 'I do not want to be in the Congress,' he wrote to a friend, 'if I must be without all old friends.' He was pining to find a way by which

he could capitulate to the Swarajists without compromising his own principles. A common friend had brought to him the news that differences over the non-cooperation programme had caused a rift between Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the extent even of affecting their personal relations. He wrote to Pandit Motilal that he did not wish to be the cause, direct or indirect, of the slightest breach in the wonderful relationship between father and son. He, therefore, offered a solution which he felt would satisfy the Swarajists and cut at the root of the wretched controversy which threatened to disrupt even the most sacred of relationships in people's homes.

The result was a near catastrophe. 'Things reported to you are absolutely false, too devilish and mean for the proudest father in the world', Motilalji wired back. In a letter to Gandhiji he wrote somewhat in these terms: 'Great as you are and your achievements in the cause of India's freedom, I have faith that Jawahar is destined to achieve still greater things in the world.' As for Gandhiji's concrete proposal he refused even to look at it since it was based presumably on personal grounds and mixed up with the outrageous allegations that had been conveyed to Gandhiji.

In reply Gandhiji wired his feeling of unmixed relief, in that the dreadful report had proved to be utterly false, and once more appealed to Motilalji to consider his proposal purely on its merits. The result was a pact which gave to the Swaraj Party full freedom to carry on its political programme on behalf of the Congress organization, without interference or obstruction by the other party, while confining Congress activity to the working out of the constructive programme.

'What was the divine trait in Pandit Motilalji's personality?' Dr B. C. Roy asked Gandhiji after Pandit Motilal's death.

'His unbounded love for Jawahar', Gandhiji replied.

'Not his love for India?' Dr Roy asked again, 'No', answered Gandhiji. 'His love for India was derived from his love for Jawahar. He was proud of India as the land that gave birth to Jawahar.'

Easily the handsomest man in the Central Assembly, suave and dignified, Pandit Motilal Nehru became the cynosure of all eyes

by virtue of his political astuteness, legal acumen and parliamentary polish—respected by his colleagues and feared by his opponents. 'See, how wide he has spread his net, he has said everything he used to say when he was actually engaged in breaking the laws and yet he has done so in a manner that no one can take exception to', was the comment of James Crerar after Motilalji's first brilliant performance in the Central Assembly when he succeeded in throwing out the Finance Bill.

He was the only person who could pull Jinnah's leg. I remember once his describing to us with impish delight how, on one occasion, Jinnah, feeling at a loss for an Urdu word while addressing a gathering of Muslims, turned to Motilalji for help. Pandit Motilal slyly gave him the word but with the slight modification of a vowel which converted it into an unutterable expression. The audience giggled. Jinnah, thinking he had made a hit, repeated that expression twice or thrice. The giggles turned into roars of laughter. When he learnt the cause, he came to Motilalji in high dudgeon saying, 'I never thought, Pandit, in your old age you could be so wicked.' He willy-nilly followed the Finance Bill in 1924, though he afterwards complained that he felt like 'a sheep that is being led to slaughter.'

Motilalji had very shrewdly appraised Jinnah's weakness for power, which drove him, in spite of his liberal convictions, more and more to seek the support of reactionaries for whom he had unmixed contempt. Before him Jinnah could not ride the high horse. 'He [Jinnah] of course always cannot defend his attitude when talking freely with me', Motilalji wrote to Gandhiji. 'His one explanation is: My dear fellow I have to take these fools with me.'

'The glass of fashion and the mould of form' no matter where he happened to be, Motilalji was sure to become 'the observed of all observers'. The most flattering tribute that he received was an address by the society ladies of Simla to protest against the violence he had done to his figure by the removal of his moustache. The husbands of some Muslim signatories to that address afterwards sent a letter to the press disapproving of their action. The old Pandit retaliated by refusing to receive the ladies in question when shortly afterwards they wanted to wait upon him in a deputation in another connection, unless their husbands apologized first for their letter to the press.

In spite of the brilliant initial victories scored by the Swarajists, stresses and strains continued to build both inside and outside the party. In 1925, the Government launched a campaign of fierce repression in Bengal. Gandhiji's answer to this was by a series of *obiter dicta* to adopt Swarajists as his 'attorneys and political representatives' and to constitute himself their unpaid advocate. To complete the process he decided quietly to fade out of the Congress himself. In August 1925, he wrote that he must no longer stand in the way of the Congress being developed and guided by educated Indians rather than one like himself who had thrown his lot entirely with the masses and who had 'fundamental differences with the mind of educated Indians as a body'. He still wanted to act upon the intelligentsia, he went on to say, but not by leading the Congress. 'I cannot be blind to the fact that . . . the disciplined resistance of the Swaraj Party has made its impression upon the rulers. The best way in which I can help the Swarajist activity is by removing myself out of the way and by concentrating solely upon constructive work with the help of the Congress and in its name, and that too, only so far as educated Indians will permit me to do so.'

After Deshabandhu Das's death, he advanced a step further. To make up for the loss that the Swarajists had sustained, he handed over to them the Congress organization and brought into being the All-India Spinners' Association, under the auspices of the Congress but functioning as an autonomous body to build up non-violent strength in the country. All political activity under this arrangement was made over to the Swaraj Party. The Swaraj Party was no longer to be a wing of the Congress, the Congress itself became the Swaraj Party. Elections were no more to be run by the Swarajists in the name of the Congress but by the Congress itself.

This was Gandhiji's historic 'Patna Surrender'. Gandhiji did not stop there. He put his services unreservedly at the disposal of the Swaraj Party, did everything in his power to help strengthen their position in the struggle against the British and freely gave them his advice when it was sought and did not mind a bit if he was consulted but not followed. The more he effaced himself, the more they needed him and the more his weight and influence in their councils grew. His utter self-abnegation gave him power

which no official position in the Congress organization or outside could have given.

Motilalji, who accepted nobody as a mentor, welcomed correction when it came from Gandhiji. During the debate in the All-India Congress Committee at the time of the Patna decision, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya had in the course of his speech in a moment of indiscretion let drop the remark that the Swaraj Party 'had betrayed its trust'. That brought Pandit Motilal to his feet. In view of the aspersion that had been cast on the Swaraj Party, he blazed forth, he refused to have anything to do with the proposal before the house unless the offending remark was unreservedly withdrawn. Gandhiji pulled up Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya for his unwarranted aspersion and Dr Pattabhi tried his best to make amends honourably. But Motilalji's blood was up. Unbending as a brass pillar he refused to relent. Gandhiji appealed to him. How could he let any provocation, however grave, deflect him from a course that was calculated to be in the best interests of the Motherland? 'I appeal to Panditji to make up for his angry lapse with tears of sorrow.' But the barb had entered too deep into the old Pandit's soul. He drily replied, 'If I cannot act upon Mahatmaji's advice it is because my fountain of tears has long dried up.' Under his breath, but in a voice loud enough to be heard by Panditji, Gandhiji remarked, 'Yet I have seen these very eyes wet with tears not very very long ago.' His words smote some chord buried deep under the load of public cares in the old patriot's heart. He relented, shook hands over the quarrel and the discussion proceeded to its happy ending.

Before long, as Gandhiji had foreseen, trouble broke out in the Swaraj Party. The Government was able by virtue of its vast powers of patronage to undermine the loyalty of the Swarajist rank and file. There were some defections and a major schism. What with the defection of the Responsivists, and what with the growing pressure of the Hindu Mahasabhis, on the one hand and the deepening intransigence of Jinnah and his Muslims on the other, the Swaraj Party was forced into one compromise after another and had to surrender position after position. In 1926 it suffered a series of reverses, particularly in the U.P. Weary of the whole melancholy business Pandit Motilal reported: 'There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists. "Defeat" is no word for it. . . . It was a fight between the forces of Nationalism

and those of a low order of Communalism reinforced by wealth, wholesale corruption, terrorism and falsehood. I have been freely denounced as a beef-eater and destroyer of cows, the supporter of the prohibition of music before mosques, and the one man responsible for the stoppage of Ramlila processions in Allahabad. I could contradict these lies in public meetings, but they penetrated hamlets and villages which I could not reach.'

By the middle of 1928, much of the earlier hopes with which Motilalji had launched on the Council-entry programme had faded. The rot had affected deeply the morale of the Swaraj Party and the youth had begun to grow restive. The more the blizzard around him raged, the closer he was drawn to Gandhiji. Two years later, a very much disillusioned man, he was writing to Gandhiji:

The time has come when the more energetic and determined workers should have their own way in guiding the political activities of the country. There are I admit points of difference between this class and the one to which you and I belong, but there is no reason why we should continue to force our views on the former. Our race is fast dying out and the struggle will sooner or later have to be continued by men of Jawahar's type. The sooner they begin the better. As for myself I feel that I have lost much of the confidence I had in myself and am more or less a spent force. It is not the throne but the power behind it which counts and I do not see much of the latter that I can rely upon, barring of course yourself.

How much water had flowed down the river since he had written to Gandhiji after the Juhu talks: 'The most important point to be considered is what is to be the position of the Swarajists in the general Congress movement. Is it to be somewhat similar to that assigned by Mahatmaji to practising lawyers who were compared to cobblers and declared debarred from taking an active part in the councils of the Congress and from being appointed on its executive? If that is the idea, Swarajists must deprive themselves of the honour of remaining under the distinguished leadership of Mahatmaji and either retire from public life or look for "fresh fields and pastures new".'

Left behind was the dust and din of the 'pro-change-no-change' controversy, the shouting and tumult of days long ago.

During the Juhu talks on the Councils-entry question between Gandhiji and the Swarajists after Gandhiji's release in 1924, Pandit Motilal was staying in J. R. D. Tata's bungalow on Juhu

beach. In the evening he daily walked back to his residence. Gandhiji used to send me to escort him back. One day, while we were walking together in silence on the beach, Motilalji suddenly stopped dead and, pointing to tall palmyra tree in the distance exclaimed, 'That is the Mahatma among the trees,' and then added 'head and shoulders above the rest.' Referring to the talks with Gandhiji he remarked, 'I have told Mahatmaji that I do not believe in his God and am not going to do so at least in this life. I am a politician. But our difficulty is that he beats us at our own game.'

In Gandhiji he found a man well versed in the affairs of the world, who had probed the depths of experience, a profound sympathy which enabled him to approach another person's problem from the latter's point of view, and a fund of practical wisdom which proved sounder than the cold calculations of politicians. Gandhiji, as the Australian Governor of Bengal, Mr R. G. Casey, noted, gave one 'the unusual feeling that he was a man with whom one could discuss his most intimate problems, and get wise and understanding advice'. More and more he became the cove where the elder statesman could cast anchor and ride out the storms and blizzards whether external or internal.

However much their political judgements might have at times differed, there was one thing that could be said of Motilalji without the shadow of a doubt. Of all those, whether inside or outside the Congress, who had dissented or broken away from Gandhiji, he was the one person who never did a thing 'in envy of great Caesar'.

'He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.'

At the time when the formation of the Swaraj Party was being mooted, Motilalji once told me that a great Indian leader, the 'uncrowned king of his province', on coming out of prison remarked to him in the course of an intimate conversation: 'How long are we going to play second fiddle to this man [Gandhiji]?' 'I told him', Motilalji went on to relate, 'My dear man, this is a high privilege for which one cannot be too grateful to Providence.'

And so, with the passage of time their mutual affection, esteem and regard continued to grow instead of diminishing.

6

'Now that you have permitted me to practise my profession', ran one of Motilalji's letters to Gandhiji in the beginning of 1927, 'I do not mind it if it is a few thousands this way or that way.' Since he had given up his legal practice at the beginning of the non-cooperation struggle, Motilalji had increasingly been worried by domestic finances. Besides the huge expenditure of maintaining Anand Bhawan, he had been financing public causes with which he was associated. Thus he had spent a considerable amount on the daily *Independent* of Allahabad. Now the *Indian Daily Telegraph* of Lucknow threatened to make another demand on his purse. He had even incurred a personal debt in the form of bank overdrafts, etc. References to his 'empty till' became more and more frequent in his letters to Gandhiji. After the modification of the Congress programme in respect of the triple boycott, Gandhiji had told Motilalji that the political ground for his not resuming his legal practice no longer existed and he had in consequence resumed it. But where his political work was concerned, the money consideration did not weigh with him in the least.

How jealous he was of his political principles and with what utter indifference he treated the money aspect of his legal practice is illustrated by one incident. He had been approached by the senior counsel of an Indian state, an Englishman, to join him as a junior in a case carrying an enormous fee. Before accepting it he took the opportunity to discuss it with Gandhiji, who was at that time staying at Mani Bhawan in Bombay. He had been assured, he said, that any opinion that he might express as an advocate would not prejudice his political opinions, or restrict his freedom of action in the Assembly or outside in any way in regard to the issue of the Indian states and the powers and privileges of the Indian princes. His fee as junior counsel of over half a lakh of rupees would 'help keep the pot boiling' and also enable 'a *kutiya* to be built for ourselves'. What did Gandhiji think of it? He was at that time contemplating in a corner of the Anand Bhawan grounds a small residence (the present Anand Bhawan) for himself and the family, which would not be so costly to maintain. The *kutiya*, if I am not mistaken, later cost much more than a lakh of rupees!

Gandhiji thought for a moment and then said, 'Somehow it

does not appeal to me.' 'All right then', Pandit Motilalji said nonchalantly as he got up, 'There it goes.' A few weeks later Gandhiji received the following note from him: 'I forgot to inform you that soon after my return . . . I threw up the . . . brief returning . . . papers and the cheque for Rs 40,000 which had been lying with me in part payment of my fees.'

In April 1927 Gandhiji had a pseudo-stroke resulting from high blood pressure. Knowing how worried Pandit Motilalji would be by the news Gandhiji sent him the following 'love letter':

I paid for the continuous overwork. . . . Nobody thinks of making the slightest fuss over far more serious cases than mine amongst common people. After all, in spite of the army of doctors, nurses and changes of air the little lamp will go out some day and the world will be no loser for the long sleep. Is not death but a sleep and a forgetting? In everything I read this patent fact is driven home. But we seem to dispute this universal testimony and seek to make exemption in favour of those who are supposed to be important to society. Well, if they disappear and are really useful, they will surely reappear in richer and unrecognizable robes.

Referring to Panditji's growing financial burden, he went on to say: 'Yes, I fully agree with you. . . . I should not even mind your quietly slipping out of the Assembly if it can be done without causing any stir. Do make the two ends meet and get rid of the incubus of debt. I know that, whenever there is real work for you, you will leave the practice and everything.'

Not to let slip an opportunity for striking a bargain for his *Daridranarayans*, in the concluding portion of his letter he wrote: 'Just as I close this letter a suggestion occurs to me. Will you set apart a certain percentage of your income for the poor spinners or any other public work that may commend itself to you?'

To this Motilalji replied:

I fully agree that death is only a form of long sleep that 'knows no waking' but . . . I do not agree that the world is not poorer for the loss of great men. . . . There are those who come and go without affecting the even tenor of the world one way or the other. They leave the world just as they found it. But there are others (very few I admit) who change the whole face of the world when they come in and leave a gap behind when they go out. This gap is less frequently filled up than not and the change has seldom proved to be for the better. You will admit that you occupy a very large space in the world of today and it is the honest truth to say that

the void you would leave behind if you suddenly adjusted yourself to the long sleep will remain a void for a good long time to come. So please don't.

Motilalji had just entered upon his sixty-seventh year and a number of people had been invited to an afternoon tea that day. His letter proceeded:

Looking back through the dim vista of 66 long years it presents to my eyes an almost unbroken record of time wasted and opportunities missed. It is depressing to think of the little if any output of all these years, and of the less that can be reasonably expected within the brief span still left to me.

I have already begun the process of 'slipping out' of the Assembly. . . . When the next session comes round in September. I shall most probably be in Europe. It will then be open to the Governor-General to declare my seat vacant; but I am afraid he will not. In that case I will see how the land lies on my return . . .

I see your eagle eyes have penetrated into my empty till from the height of Nandy Hills [where Gandhiji had gone to convalesce after his illness] and have discovered something lying at the bottom. Yes, I am making some money but not much to speak of. April brought some Rs. 15,000 out of which £500 (a little less than Rs. 7,000) went to Switzerland and the balance to pay outstanding bills mostly on the building account. May has opened very well with a single fee of Rs. 13,000, the whole of which has gone to clear the overdrafts in the various banks. The bigger creditors have not yet been paid anything. These must be tackled now as they have the first charge and your 'poor spinners' only the second. I must be just before I am generous. Remember my offer to contribute a lakh a year to the Tilak fund if you would only let me continue my practice. But you refused to be 'wicked' as you then put it. Give me time to raise my head above water and you will not be disappointed. I have put J at the bottom of the list of creditors. As soon as he reports that he has been paid in full you will not have to wait long for my little quota. But please do not forget that Krishna has to be married. She is about 20 now, and I am 66.

Gandhiji was deeply moved. 'I prize your . . . letter as a gift', he wrote back. 'It shows you in all your greatness and goodness'. Enlivening his concern as usual with affectionate banter, he proceeded: 'You are living for your children. I envy this. But Krishna's wedding must not be after Jawahar's type. It must be as humble as Sarup's. Otherwise I must apply for a warrant of attachment. Or, I feel I must enter into collusion with Krishna.'

In the previous year Jawaharlal had gone to Switzerland for his wife Kamala Nehru's treatment. His fame had preceded him and all kinds of people were coming to meet him, including

Indian revolutionaries. This had not escaped the vigilance of the British Secret Service, which was very well-organized on the continent and Pandit Motilalji began to fear for his son's safety. 'To escort the young gentleman safe home', among other things, he decided to go to Europe. Accordingly, he booked for Europe with options on three sailings, the latest on the 31 August. But for considerable time it was a question when he would actually be able to sail. The empty till threatened to upset all plans.

This he would not suffer. He began to nearly kill himself by overwork. Describing this he wrote to Gandhiji in the second week of June 1927:

I have all this time been on the tramp unmindful of the terrible heat and the scorching *loo* [hot winds]. The last effort has however proved a little too much and I am taking a few days' rest in Allahabad. I came back from Furrukhabad only yesterday after a strenuous fortnight, half of which was spent talking incessantly from ten to four in an overcrowded room with an apology for a hand-pulled punkha overhead. It was an election case and as I was not familiar with election law it entailed a lot of work at home besides the talking in Court. At the end I was more dead than alive and Rs 2,000 a day at Lucknow for the next fortnight did not tempt me. So here I am to recoup till the next engagement comes.

I think I have already told you that my passage to Europe has been booked. . . . I should like to take the first of these boats but . . . it is even possible that I may be detained till the last boat sails. It all depends on the bank balance about the date of sailing. I have not fared badly so far and cannot complain if I feel fatigued in circumstances more or less trying for much younger men. But experience has shown that I must use myself even more sparingly than I have been doing. This will necessarily delay the filling up of the till and whatever happens I cannot put off my departure beyond 31 August.

The 'young man' was 'escorted safely home'. He had returned after his sojourn in Europe with his natural impulsiveness considerably heightened. To keep 'the lion's cub from ravening' on the one hand, and from walking into the snares and traps of the wily stalker on the other, thereafter became increasingly the concern of both the father and the Mahatma. Not unfrequently this called for a carefully planned, joint strategy on their part. It forged an additional link if one were needed in the bond between them.

The deterioration in the Congress position that commenced in the latter half of 1925 had steadily continued through the

following years. To take the situation out of the political doldrums Motilalji had as early as May 1927 proposed that Pandit Jawaharlal should be put in charge of the Congress as President. 'His letters breathe an unshakable faith not only in our ultimate victory against the forces of reaction but also in our present capacity to put up a strong fight. . . . My fear is that the habit of playing the role of the humble soldier in the presence of the great general may check the necessary assertiveness required by the occasion.' But Gandhiji was firmly of the view that it would not be fair to Jawaharlal in the atmosphere then prevailing to saddle him with the thankless task. 'Jawahar's time will be simply taken away in keeping the Congress house tolerably pure and he will simply sicken.' And again, 'He is too high-souled to stand the anarchy and hooliganism that seem to be growing in the Congress. . . . I am confident, however, that the anarchy will spend itself before long and the hooligans will themselves want a disciplinarian. Jawahar will come in then.'

Three events in the latter half of 1928 altered the situation. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel achieved a resounding victory in the no-tax satyagraha campaign of the Bardoli peasants. The Nehru Committee, appointed by the All-Parties Conference, was able to present a unanimous report on the constitutional issue, including the communal question. Gandhiji commented that the one provided the key to 'organic Swaraj' and the other to 'constitutional Swaraj'. The third event of importance was the appointment of the all-White Simon Commission in the face of unanimous Indian protest and its complete boycott by all parties in the country.

In July 1928, Motilalji again reverted to the question of Congress Presidentship in the changed situation: 'I am clear that the hero of the hour is Vallabhbhai. Failing him, I think that under all the circumstances Jawaharlal would be the next best choice.' But the annual session of the Congress for 1928 was expected to be a stormy one. It turned out to be both stormy and tortuous. The crown descended neither on the Sardar of Bardoli nor on Pandit Jawaharlal's head; it had to be worn by Motilalji himself, and a veritable crown of thorns it proved to be. 'May I ask you to strengthen the hands of my Committee by one or two more paragraphs in *Young India* recommending the adoption of Dominion Status by the Congress without prejudice

to the ultimate goal of Complete Independence?' Motilalji wrote to Gandhiji on the eve of the Congress. The Nehru Committee's report was based on 'Dominion Status' as the immediate goal. The independence-wallahs had got the Congress in the previous year at Madras to pass a resolution in favour of 'Complete Independence'. They now threatened to create rough weather in the forthcoming Congress. Consequent upon the popular demonstration against the Simon Commission, there had been brutal assaults on crowds by the police. As a result, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had received serious injuries at Lucknow, and Lala Lajpat Rai at Lahore, which precipitated his death some time later. This had exacerbated popular feelings all over the country. Pandit Jawaharlal aligned himself with the Bengal group under Subhas Bose. 'Both Subhas and Jawahar have told you in their speeches', Motilalji remarked sardonically in his concluding speech, 'that in their opinion we old-age men are no good, are not strong enough, and are hopelessly behind the times. There is nothing new in this. It is common in this world that the young always regard aged men as behind the times.' It was only the adoption of the resolution jointly prepared by the two elders, Motilalji and Gandhiji, that if Dominion Status was not conceded by the end of 1929 the Congress would declare for complete independence and launch a satyagraha for its achievement, that prevented the impatient young bloods in the Congress, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, from pursuing an extreme course.

Gandhiji had been most unwilling to attend the Congress session at Calcutta, but yielded to Pandit Motilalji. His experience there had been anything but pleasant and Motilalji felt very sore at heart for having taken Gandhiji there. 'I cannot help feeling', he wrote to Gandhiji 'that by asking you to attend the Convention and the Congress I took you out of your clean surroundings into an atmosphere recharged with unreality and untruth. It was quite apparent that a good deal of what you saw and heard was not only not to your liking but even painful to you. That this was not unexpected, only aggravates my offence. At the same time if there ever was an offence which deserved to be condoned I venture to think it was mine.'

'No apology whatsoever is necessary for taking me to Calcutta', wrote back Gandhiji. 'It was as well. I was quite happy

over it and it gave me an insight into the present working of the Congress which I certainly did not possess. And after all, we have to battle both within and without.'

The Congress having issued a clear mandate, all three, the father, the son and Gandhiji—each in his characteristic way—set about feverishly to meet any challenge that the coming year might hold in store. Pandit Motilal had tied himself down heavily to a number of professional engagements. The chief of these was in connection with what was known as the Darbhanga law-suit involving something like two crores of rupees. The fee in this case by itself would have sufficed to clear all of Motilalji's debts, but it made heavy demands on his time. The brief already ran into something like 3000 printed pages, though the trial had not yet commenced. Still, he dared not give it up on that account.

Indications on the other hand were not lacking that the Government was not going to take any chances this time. The launching of any spirited activity by the Congress would be met by heavy repression. Gandhiji had received an invitation to visit Europe and asked Motilalji for his opinion in view of the situation that was developing. The one question that haunted Motilalji was: What if they arrest Jawahar? 'What form the repression will take it is difficult to say,' ran one of Motilalji's letters to Gandhiji. 'But I have no doubt in my mind that it is coming.'

The mishandling of the easiest possible situations by the Government is becoming a matter of everyday occurrence. . . . Hailey will come back in March and I expect he will inaugurate a reign of terror soon after his return to the U.P. His first move will be against Jawahar, for whom he has expressed the highest admiration to those who were likely to be communicative to me. 'It is such men that make history', he said to one of these. . . . The great success of the Simon boycott demonstrations in the U.P. has entirely upset him and he is sure to have his vengeance. The Congress activities will only add fuel to the flame, which from its very nature will spread to the other provinces in varying degrees of intensity. Hailey is only another name for O'Dwyer. He is a firm believer in martial law and no damned nonsense. He will strengthen his hands in England and then let go all the furies he commands. It is the easiest thing in the world to take a thoroughly straight and earnest patriot like Jawahar. All that need be done (and I am almost sure will be done) is to get some flunkey Zamindar or Taluqdar to oppress his tenantry beyond endurance. The one man they will appeal to is Jawahar and no power on earth will

restrain him from answering the call of duty. The Government knows it and will profit by it and Jawahar will walk into their parlour. You can easily understand what this will mean to me but will it do any good to the country? Perhaps some, but in my opinion out of all proportion to the price. This I say quite apart from the personal aspect.

But come what may, he had braced himself for every conceivable emergency.

I have already told you what my own limitations are but if the time for action comes they will not stand in my way. These limitations are the creatures of circumstances. A change in the circumstances will not only alter but demolish them if necessary. *I am longing for such a change and shall welcome it when it comes.*

I have pictured this change to my mind and have looked round to see what support and guidance would be available to me for the necessary action. But what when the *gaddi* of Sabarmati has shifted to Europe? The answer is plain. While there would be a hopeless muddle in India, the occupant of the *gaddi* would feel miserable in Europe.

This was his answer to the challenge of independence.

Pandit Jawaharlal's answer to the challenge of independence was, in Motilalji's words, 'to put himself in training by giving up smoking and resorting to a harder life than usual'. 'It is quite like Jawahar that he should give up smoking, a fine preparation to face Hailey', was Gandhiji's comment. 'I do not know that Hailey will lay hands upon Jawahar quite so easily as you think.' By one reassuring remark he laid at rest the elder Nehru's fears.

Before long, Motilalji had shed his misgivings about Gandhiji's forthcoming European tour. In the last week of January 1929 he wrote to him: 'I have no doubt now that your trip to Europe cannot be abandoned in the totality of circumstances'. He followed it up with a wire: 'Have reconsidered situation. Don't feel justified in upsetting your elaborate European programme. Please make your arrangements.'

But in the meantime Gandhiji's 'inner voice' had spoken. Having put the constructive work resolution before the Congress at Calcutta, and having received universal support, he felt that he would be guilty of 'desertion' if he now went to Europe. 'Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle, whatever shape it may take', he wrote in *Young India*. 'If the Nehru Report is not accepted by or on behalf of the British people before the end of the year, after midnight on December 31st next, it will cease to have any meaning for me. I must

declare myself an independence-wallah. But if I mean this seriously, I may not leave India for the best part of this year of probation and preparation. On the contrary, I must strain every nerve to carry out the preparatory programme.' To Motilalji he wrote, 'You will have read what I have said in *Young India* about the European visit. . . . It was like a weight lifted off my back.' And so the 'elaborate European tour programme' was abandoned without any thought of its resumption even at a later date.

This was Gandhiji's reply to the challenge of independence.

8

The question of Congress Presidentship in this context became one of supreme importance. Everybody wanted Gandhiji to wear the crown. The only exception was Gandhiji himself. He had his own reasons for the refusal and they were too cogent to be set aside. Motilalji had no doubt that, in the circumstances, Jawaharlal was the fittest choice, and in that judgement Gandhiji wholly concurred.

There can be no question that your [Gandhiji] accepting the chair will give additional weight, dignity and prestige to the office though . . . there will hardly be any practical difference if you put Jawaharlal or Vallabhbhai in it. You are the real power whether on the throne or behind it.

I have been thinking hard over the matter. It appears to me that barring one awkward element in the case all the reasons point to your accepting. It consists in our apparent stinginess in parting with power and keeping the younger set out of it. Beyond this it is altogether in the fitness of things that you should accept. I would not attach undue importance to this element and if the nation is to be led along definite lines of activity there is no one more capable than you of leading it.

In the situation that faced the country—with the youth, raw and inexperienced in full revolt on the one hand, and the Government determined as ever to meet by savage repression any challenge to its authority on the other—his prescription was 'Head of Gandhiji and the voice of Jawahar'. His letter to Gandhiji conveying this also showed how deep the iron had entered in his soul. One can almost picture to oneself the veteran war-horse impatiently pawing the ground at the familiar smell of gun-powder.

I am all for a bold policy and bolder execution of that policy. . . . It is only the younger men that we can count upon and the younger men are

not satisfied with the old policy. How to give a new orientation to it is the question. It does not matter who gives this new orientation but the urgent need of it is there if we mean to keep a hold on the younger men. Again, it will not do to put a young man in command and then tie him hand and foot together with our 'sage advice'. At the same time there is the risk of his going too far but greater risks have to be taken in resisting a powerful Government.

The situation as it is developing from day to day promises to become more acute than it was in 1920-1 and its foundations are deeper than they were ten years ago. It is particularly free from the mob psychology of 1921-22 and, instead of a passing wave of excitement throughout the country, carrying men of all descriptions mostly ignorant and uneducated off their feet, it is getting firmly rooted in conviction born of a study however superficial of world conditions. In fact, the revolt of the youth has become an accomplished fact and there is no province in India today where it is not widespread. The Government is blind and the action it is taking is only adding fuel to the fire. It would be sheer flattery to say that you have today the same influence as you had over the youth of the country some years ago and most of them make no secret of the fact. All this would indicate that the need of the hour is the head of Gandhiji and the voice of Jawahar

Even Jawahar is not a *persona grata* with a good many of them, specially those of the school of violence, but perhaps he will be tolerated to a greater degree than any of us

These are strong reasons for either you or Jawahar to wear the crown, and if you and Jawahar stand together, as to which there is no doubt in my own mind, it does not really matter who it is that stands in front and who behind.

While the issue of the Presidentship of the coming Congress session was still undecided, a small complication appeared which threatened to queer the pitch of the whole innings in prospect. In July 1929 the Meerut magistrate served on Pandit Jawaharlal as the General Secretary of the Congress a notice to produce certain documents in connection with what was known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case, in which a number of communists were being tried on a charge of conspiracy. If Jawaharlal refused to produce the documents on the principle that Congressman must not help the prosecution in any way, he could be hauled up for 'disobeying lawful orders passed by a court of justice', involving a sentence of six months and a fine. This would not have in the least helped the defence, as the documents could be and would have been seized by the Government at any time. In fact, it was not certain whether the documents were not of more

use to the defence than to the prosecution. In that circumstance, would it be worth while to ride to death an abstract principle? Motilalji placed his dilemma before Gandhiji:

Jawahar has already informed the Meerut Court that he has files of these letters. . . . He has also told the Magistrate that all these letters were received by him as General Secretary of the Congress and that he is unable to produce them without the sanction of the Congress Executive. . . . No reply has been received to this communication. . . . If another order to produce is received, which is almost certain . . . along with his prosecution a search of the Congress Office here will be ordered and the papers taken—unless they are removed which you are not likely to suggest. The result is that the prosecution will get all the help they need and in the bargain have the satisfaction of locking up a very much wanted man (possibly the Congress President for the eventful year 1930) for six solid months. Again, I am not sure that if, as is the case, the papers required do not in the least help the prosecution and may possibly help the defence, the mere fact of producing them can be held to go against the principle I have referred to

We have not yet declared for independence or refused to accept the jurisdiction of the existing courts. You have appeared in them both to answer a charge and give evidence. So far as I am concerned, I am making a living out of the courts. . . . *I cannot see how I can ride the high horse and preach principles which are falsified by my day-to-day life. It is true that Jawahar is not so fettered but he has expressly put himself under my orders. With what face can I order him to go to jail for the very thing I am myself doing day after day?* But, this is by the way, as Jawahar can act in spite of my orders to the contrary, however small he may make me feel by doing so. But is he himself so situated as to be independent of courts? Why should the principle be applied to giving evidence for the prosecution and not to giving evidence for the defence? In either case, you are maintaining the authority of the court. *To my mind Jawahar will only make himself ridiculous by both helping the Government to the fullest extent he can and going to jail for it.* The papers have already been made available to the Government—they are there and can be seized at any moment. The refusal to produce them can help nobody.

I should like to have your opinion on the case as I have stated it, and in giving it please eliminate the personal elements I have introduced and which I now feel was wrong on my part to do.

This might have presented a very difficult conundrum as Gandhiji had already directed people to disobey the orders of the court. But for once history came to the rescue, like the classical *deus ex machina*. The Conservative Government in England had fallen and Labour had come to power in May. Consequent upon it, Lord Irwin had gone to England on four

months' leave to discuss with the new Government the question of India's next instalment of political reforms. Returning at the end of October he invited Indian leaders to meet him to discuss the proposals he had brought with him. In the changed climate no rash action that might jeopardize the success of the coming talks could be countenanced by the authorities, and the crisis was averted.

9

The proposed Conference of Indian leaders with Lord Irwin could not be held before the last week of December 1929. It surprised nobody when it ended in smoke. The stage was set for the momentous Lahore Congress of 1929.

The Congress had in its session at Calcutta demanded Dominion Status for India before the end of the year. On the eve of the Congress session at Lahore, Mr Wedgewood Benn issued a statement saying that India already had Dominion Status in action. So what more did she want?

'Have you seen Wedgewood Benn's statement?' Gandhiji asked Motilalji, when the latter called on him at Lakshmidas Gadodia's residence in a narrow lane in Old Delhi. Sitting around Gandhiji was a small group of workers from Jamia Millia, including old Shafique Saheb.

'If this is Dominion Status in action,' Motilalji replied, 'then we know what "Dominion Status" means, and we have no further use for it. It makes our task at Lahore easier.'

As the clock chimed the midnight hour, and the old year was rung out and the new rung in, the Congress, meeting on the Ravi's bank, passed a resolution in favour of complete independence. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru signalled the event by dancing in gay abandon a *carmagnole* dance around the national flag staff.

Pandit Motilal had now everything he wanted—a fight-to-the-finish in prospect after years of barren, disillusioning experience of Parliamentary activity, out of which he had emerged with colours torn and tattered but unsoiled; his son, the pride of his heart, installed on the Congress *gadi*; and the whole of the surviving 'old guard' with the Mahatma at the head to back that fight. India had its date with destiny.

Motilalji's finest hour had come. He was in good fettle. On

the following day, in the first meeting of the new All-India Congress Committee he was addressing the house in English when some youngsters tried to prod him into speaking Hindustani 'in view of the resolution on complete independence that the Congress has passed'. 'Wait, my dear men', Motilalji snapped. 'I shall soon show that I can do my independence much better than you fellows who only know how to shout independence.' Unless the interrupters behaved, he told them, we would speak in a Hindustani of which they would not be able to understand a sentence. There was no more trouble after that. Everybody knew the highly racy, colloquial Hindustani studded with 'jewels five-word long' and Persian quotations, not always easy to follow, which Panditji used when addressing gatherings before he stepped down in *dhoti* and *kurta* into the non-cooperation arena to address the crowds for the first time in his homely Hindustani.

A communist member rose to speak, wearing non-khadi, obviously foreign cloth. Members objected. The Congress Constitution required every member of the All-India Congress Committee habitually to wear hand-spun. But the comrade maintained that what he was wearing was, indeed, khadi. Under the existing rules of the All-India Congress Committee there was no remedy for this. A member's statement was accepted at its face value. All in the house were expected to be honourable.

Pandit Motilalji was appealed to: 'Was it "honourable" for a member to tell "bare-faced lies"?' 'Obviously,' replied the Pandit in a level tone, 'So the honourable comrade seems to hold.'

The crisis was blown off in a cascade of laughter.

Soon after Gandhiji had issued his ultimatum to the Viceroy about launching the Salt Satyagraha. Panditji visited him in his Ashram at Sabarmati.

'Well, what's the news?' Gandhiji asked him.

'The talk among the official circles is', he replied, 'that even if India were to make salt for seven years, it would not make a dent in their revenues.'

'Well, wait and see', Gandhiji replied with a smile.

Starting from Ahmedabad on 12 March 1930, Gandhiji, with his party of seventy-nine, reached a little speck of a village near Jambosar in the Broach district of Gujarat on 22 March, at past

midnight after crossing the Mahikantha at low tide, weary and foot-sore, and bespattered with mud that came down in cascades over one's head as one stepped on the oozy bed of the creek. Without even a wash, in the small hours of the morning sitting astride a bed-roll, he had a conference by the flickering light of a hurricane lantern with Pandit Motilalji, who with Pandit Jawaharlalji had arrived a little before him. Among the things they discussed was a proposal for making a gift of Motilalji's Anand Bhawan to the nation. 'The elder Pandit had overheard Jawaharlal remarking', Gandhiji afterwards related, 'that Anand Bhawan would belong to the nation when it came into his hands.' So Motilalji said to himself, 'Why wait? Why not do it myself?' And as a fitting prelude to the great struggle on which the nation was entering, he took the decision to make to the nation the gift of his old residence with its legendary history, to be known thereafter as Swaraj Bhawan.

Rich in historical memories, it was here while Gandhiji was staying in it that the foundations of the Non-co-operation movement were laid by him in 1920, and many speeches were delivered by him on its grounds. It was here that the Civil Disobedience Committee held its final sittings and the Committee's report, which paved the way for the Council-entry programme, was prepared. The Swaraj Party was born here and it was again here that the All-Parties Committee held its meetings and drew up its report.

The proposal was given effect to on 6 April 1930, the day on which Gandhiji celebrated the opening of National Week by picking, in the grey of the morning, contraband salt on Dandi beach, and with that touched off the unique, the most spectacular and the biggest non-violent mass struggle that the present age has known. Soon after that Pandit Motilalji himself broke the salt law by preparing contraband salt in a big public gathering at Allahabad.

A newsman representing a Government or a semi-Government (I forget which) news agency reported that no contraband salt at all had been cooked; what had been exhibited as contraband was the salt obtained from the bazaar. With devastating invective Pandit Motilalji characterized the press agent's report as suggestive of an 'advanced state of imbecility'.

A few days later, he received a short note from Gandhiji from

Camp Karadi: 'Jambosar is no longer the sleepy hollow you saw. The whole face of the countryside has changed.'

Gandhiji was arrested on the night of 5 May. Thousands had been arrested before him and the arrest of many more thousands followed. But for a long time the Government left Pandit Motilalji alone. And so through the gruelling heat of April, May and June, he busied himself with organizing the boycott of foreign cloth by entering into a pact with the Indian mill-owners.

At last they could let him alone no longer. He was taken on 30 June. The arrest was for him a sort of relief. He was at that time suffering badly from a cough and asthma, besides an obstinate low fever with intermittent malaria. Under the cumulative strain his memory had of late frequently begun to betray him.

While in Bombay in connection with the organization of the foreign cloth boycott, Motilalji had given his approval to a short statement that had been submitted to him by George Slocombe, the *Daily Herald* representative. The statement ran:

If in certain circumstances the British Government and the Government of India, although unable to anticipate the recommendations that may in perfect freedom be made by the Round Table Conference, or the attitude which the British Parliament may reserve for such recommendations,

Would nevertheless be willing to give a private assurance that they would support a demand for full responsible government for India, subject to such mutual adjustments and terms of transfer as are required by the special needs and conditions of India and by her long association with Great Britain and as may be defined by the R.T.C.

Pandit Motilal Nehru would undertake to take personally such an assurance or the indication received from a responsible third party that such an assurance would be forthcoming—to Mr Gandhi—and to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

If such an assurance were offered and accepted, it would render possible a general measure for conciliation which should entail the simultaneous calling off of the civil disobedience movement, the cessation of the government's present repressive policy, and a generous measure of amnesty for political prisoners and would be followed by Congress participation in the R.T.C. on terms to be mutually agreed upon.

On the basis of this statement Sapru and Jayakar saw the Viceroy and, armed with his personal assurance, they again saw, with a note from Gandhiji, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in prison. They were told by both father and son that nothing further could be done without consultation

with Gandhiji, then in Yeravda Central Prison, and other members of the Congress Working Committee.

In August 1930, Motilalji with Jawaharlalji was brought by a special train to Yeravda Central Prison to confer with Gandhiji on the Sapru-Jayakar proposals. Gandhiji was at that time being kept incommunicado in what was known as the 'European Ward'. In the neighbouring yard, on the other side of the stone wall, I was in solitary confinement for the alleged offence of having abetted a hunger strike involving some 1100 satyagrahi prisoners.

Although the strictest secrecy is supposed to be enjoined and enforced in jail in regard to such matters, anyone who has had any prison experience knows how such news spreads in jail, the speed at which it spreads being roughly proportional to the square of the strictness of the 'security measures' enforced. On the day following upon which their first interview with Gandhiji was to take place, a criminal warder brought, with a long face, the news that the arrangements for the meeting between Gandhiji and the illustrious visitors had ended in a fiasco. Sapru and Jayakar, it seems, had entered into an arrangement with the Inspector General of Prisons that the first meeting between Gandhiji and Motilalji and other members of the Congress Working Committee should take place in their presence. Immediately on arrival Pandit Motilal asked to be taken to Gandhiji. He was told that this could not be done, as the first meeting had to be in the presence of Sapru and Jayakar and they had not yet arrived. Motilalji was furious. In the circumstance, he said, he refused absolutely to see Sapru and Jayakar or to meet Gandhiji under the surveillance of the two intermediaries. The latter saw that a *faux pas* had been made, much explaining followed, the mistake was rectified and Motilalji and Jawaharlalji were taken into and lodged in the same yard as Gandhiji, where they had their first meeting and their subsequent meetings, whenever they wished, all by themselves.

It has always remained a mystery to me how such detailed and accurate information about what was supposed to be a top secret was obtained by our friend the criminal warder. For, a few weeks later when I was taken out of solitary confinement and sent to Gandhiji as his companion in prison, every bit of what I had learnt was substantiated.

On the last day, the criminal warder friend again came with a grave face, bringing news of 'a big, oblong envelope' that had come 'bearing the red seal of the Government' and the smileless looks with which the note was taken out and passed from hand to hand in silence. We knew that the negotiations for a settlement had failed. The next day the visitors were all taken back to their respective prisons.

10

On 25 January at midnight Gandhiji was released. We reached Bombay the next morning on 'Independence Day'. Almost the first piece of intelligence that we received there was that Pandit Motilalji, who had been released in the second week of September, was seriously ill. That same night we left for Allahabad.

Meeting Motilalji, as one after another we were presented to him lying in bed, was an overwhelming experience. He was very weak. The voice was husky, he spoke little, and there was a swelling on the face. But there was not a trace of despondency. The marvellous mass-awakening and the unconquerable will to be free which the people had displayed during the recent months had infused in him new life. 'You have already won Swaraj', he told Gandhiji. 'Nothing can keep it from us now, though I won't live to see it.' A couple of weeks earlier he had got the Working Committee to adopt a strong and uncompromising resolution summarily rejecting the proposals that had emanated from the first Round Table Conference. However, on a cabled request from V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and others from London, this resolution had been locked up in a steel safe without being issued to the press, and we were later told that even Pandit Jawaharlal had not seen it.

Motilalji continued to struggle heroically against his illness, and sometimes even made light of it: 'Mahatmaji, you have perfect control over your sleep. I have perfect control over my digestion; it never fails me.' A consignment of live lobster which his friend the Maharaja of Mysore had sent by air arrived after his death.

After a few days the doctors in attendance—M. A. Ansari, B. C. Roy and Jivraj Mehta—decided to take Motilalji to Lucknow for X-Ray therapy. Chronic asthma had resulted in extensive fibrosis of the lung tissue. This had brought on congestion and

emphysema of the chest; and obstruction of the lymph-fluid, due to the back pressure of the venous blood, had caused the swelling to appear on the face and on the body generally. The swelling made it difficult to get at the veins when the doctors tried to draw a sample of blood for a test preliminary to the treatment; and so that treatment had to be given up. Pandit Motilalji remained in high spirits till the very end, talking, laughing, sometimes even cracking jokes. 'Have I not qualified for a beauty competition?' he remarked with a laugh, referring to the swelling on his face, as Rajendra Babu went to take leave of him on the eve of his journey to Lucknow. A negro masseur had been employed to massage him a few days before his death. On the last night Motilalji asked him his name. 'Austin', the masseur replied. Motilalji quipped, 'How many Baby Austins do you boast, Mr Austin?'

The end came rather suddenly. In the early hours of the morning a muffled sound of wailing reached Gandhiji's ears, as he lay resting after his morning prayer. Minutes later, Pandit Jawaharlal came with the news that all was over. He had been with his father till midnight. ' "A very strange thing happened to me", Papa told me last night', he told Gandhiji. ' "I had been taught the *Gayatri Mantra* in my childhood but I never cared to repeat it and I had thought that I had forgotten it completely long long ago. But tonight as I lay in bed it all came back to me and I found myself repeating it." ' Gandhiji listened to the story in silence. This was, with one exception perhaps, the nearest approach to a spontaneous prayer in Motilalji's life. The other one is too sacred to relate.

Next day the body was taken back to Allahabad. The ivory-pale face, filled out and half-buried under the mass of flowers, reminded one of a Roman Emperor's head in sculptured marble. Cold, disdainful and proud, he lay with the habitual self-confident look of a man accustomed to be obeyed. Triumphant in death as he had been in life, in the repose of eternal sleep, he appeared kinglier than ever. Fortune had showered upon him its choicest gifts. He had warmed both hands before the fire of life and ere its embers had sunk to their last flicker, the old warrior had hived himself to his next bivouac.

'My position is worse than widow's', Gandhiji remarked pathetically to a newsman. 'What I have lost through Motilalji's

death is a loss for ever. "Rock of Ages cleft for me. Let me hide myself in Thee". ' In a message to *Young India* he wrote, 'Panditji has died a true warrior's death. It is therefore well with him. He lives more amply and more truly by dying. I pray to God that He may endow me with greater consecration to the service of the cause for which alone life is worth living in these days of purification through sacrifice and suffering.'

We stayed on in Anand Bhawan for a few days and then left for Delhi for the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations. The son took up where the father had left, Gandhiji taking the father's place with the son. But that, as the poet says, is a matter

 'for another rhyme,
And I-to this might add another tale.'

1961

Dr Tej Bahadur Sapru

Dr Tej Bahadur Sapru, who passed away at Allahabad on 20 January 1949 after a prolonged illness, was truly *un knight sans peur et sans reproche*. An ardent patriot and a doughty fighter for the country's freedom according to his lights, the closer one came in contact with him the more one learnt to respect him for his purity of character, uncompromising integrity and sturdy independence of mind, which refused to bow to fear or favour. Very few people fully understood this characteristic of his, and many misunderstood his actions during his lifetime. It is very little known, for instance, how it was his fearless opposition that ultimately forced Lord Reading's Government to reverse their decision to arrest Gandhiji at the time of the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1921. When General Smuts tried to browbeat others at the Imperial Conference in London, it was he who stood up and hit back undismayed and unsubdued. Equally sturdy was the fight which he put up when, at the second Round Table Conference, Sir Samuel Hoare and the India Office sought to force upon the country provincial autonomy without responsibility at the Centre. He left the Congress on the issue of non-cooperation and joined the Indian Liberal Federation. But his independence of mind would not let him rest there and in the end he broke away from them too.

Dr Sapru's unblemished personal life and uttermost purity of motives, in which nothing sordid or mean could ever enter, put him on a pedestal where few could rival him. His love of truth and love of the motherland forged between him and Gandhiji ties which no amount of political difference could weaken or sever. Illustrative of it was a remark dropped by Dr Sapru during one of his meetings with Gandhiji some time after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. 'Mahatmaji, irrespective of one's political philosophy, how can anyone fail to take note of the transformation which you have wrought in the entire outlook

and mood of your people? For instance, what am I to do when my grandchildren snuggle into my lap when I return home at evening and shout in my face "Toady Bachcha Hai-Hai" '—a slogan anathemizing the loyalist supporters of British rule that had penetrated every nook and corner of India. And so, in spite of their sharp differences in regard to Direct Action, there never was a crisis in Gandhiji's life in which Dr Sapru failed to rally to his side and do his bit. The part he played in the negotiations in Yeravda Central Prison during the first satyagraha struggle in 1930, then again at the time of Gandhiji's epic Harijan fast, and finally in the Leaders' Conference at the time of Gandhiji's twenty-one-day fast in the Aga Khan Palace, is too well known to need recounting here. When I approached Dr Sapru in July last for information about certain episodes of Gandhiji's life, in connection with the writing of Gandhiji's biography, he was bed-ridden. But he promptly wrote back that not only did he regard it as a privilege but a sacred duty to give all the help that he could in the task.

It was only in October 1948 that I could avail myself of his kind offer. On the day before he was assassinated, Gandhiji had asked me to disengage myself from the work in Noakhali which he had entrusted to me, as he wanted me to accompany him to Pakistan. I was to have returned to Noakhali from Sevagram via Calcutta for the purpose. On the way I broke journey at Allahabad. On learning from my host that Dr Sapru's condition had greatly deteriorated, I called on him to pay my respects. I had intended to resume my journey on the same day. But when I went to Dr Sapru to seek his leave, he said, 'No, you cannot go. There are a lot of things I have to tell you about Gandhiji.' It was his terminal illness. Parkinson's disease had caused a paralysis of the muscles. He could hardly sit up in bed or lie down without help. The speech was fumbling and at times needed the trained ear of his intimate attendants to be intelligible, but the mind was crystal clear and as vigorous as ever, and his memory had lost none of its pristine sharpness and pungency. The doctor in attendance on him, Dr Jagat Ram Bhatia, retired Director of Public Health, Bihar, was from the same town as I and we had been together at college. 'Sir Tej had asked me to give him thrice the usual doze of brucine so that he can talk to you more clearly', he told me. I felt overwhelmed at the way he

gave me hour after hour to satisfy my thirst for facts about Gandhiji's life. With an amazing precision he recalled the minute details of the incidents he described—even the dates and time when he met certain statesmen and their exact words during the talks. What follows is a resume of what I jotted down immediately after my meeting with him each day.

29-9-48

In the morning Sir T. B. Sapru recalled events in connection with Gandhiji's epic fast. When Devadas saw him in that connection, Sir Tej felt that the case was hopeless. Later, however, he saw Dr Ambedkar and asked him if he would be satisfied if he could have Harijan representatives of the Harijans' own choice in the first instance who would form an electoral college for holding secondary elections by the joint vote of Hindus and Scheduled Castes. Ambedkar agreed. Sir Tej put the matter to the gathering at Birla House, Bombay, where the discussion waxed hot and long. There was petty haggling over piffles. Dr Gilder's announcement that the sands were running out fast, and further shilly-shallying might cost him dear, brought matters to a head. Sir Tej took Ambedkar with him. In a final talk with Gandhiji, Dr Ambedkar finally accepted the formula, and touched Gandhiji's feet—so overwhelmed he was by Gandhiji's generosity. 'It is not true, as Dr Ambedkar afterwards said,' remarked Sir Tej, 'that he gave in only to save Gandhiji's life because Gandhiji's blood pressure had shot up.'

Remarked Lord Reading to Sir T. B. some time after when he met him in England: 'You may have any opinion about Gandhi's political activities, but what he had done on this occasion will make his name live in history.'

In the afternoon Sir Tej recalled events relating to the second Round Table Conference. He absolved the European group of the charge of intriguing with the British Government to foil the Congress. They said that if others came to an agreement, the Europeans would not raise any objection. Jinnah and Shaffi's attitude was not bad, but Aga Khan's was unhelpful. On the side of the Hindus, Raja Narendra Nath, Malaviyaji and Dr Moonje stuck out on piffles.

Sir Tej saw the British Prime Minister at 9 a.m. Took G. D. Birla and Malaviyaji with him. They discussed the formula of joint (separate?) electorates for 10 years. Malaviyaji objected that they were being inundated with telegrams from India asking them not to accept that formula. Ramsey MacDonald felt annoyed, said he was not Prime Minister for nothing. He took up his file and read out some telegrams showing that it was the representatives participating in the conference who had asked their organizations in India to organize opposition and send telegrams to the representatives at the conference by way of a demonstration. Later, the Aga Khan came and exactly the same story was repeated. 'I felt humiliated. I

was the only person who till the end refused to sign the joint request for the Premier's decision. I later wrote a separate letter to the Prime Minister saying that, if I was in his position, I would not interfere in this matter. But if I had to give an award, it would be for an all-out settlement. It was no use making a settlement between Hindus and Muslims and leaving the Hindus and the Scheduled Castes to quarrel among themselves.

Sir Tej described in vivid detail an incident that occurred when he gave a party at Dorchester Hotel. Bapu was the guest of honour. Over 100 guests were sitting in the lounge. Sir Tej consulted the *Maitre d'hotel*, and offered to take Gandhiji by a side entrance if his unconventional mode of dress was likely to shock the ladies. But they [the management] insisted on his being brought through the front entrance and not only loudly cheered him but introduced him to all present. At the end came the *Maitre*, Mr Charles. He asked Gandhiji if he recognized him. Gandhiji did not. He then reminded him how, when Gandhiji was a young student in London, they used to take dancing lessons together, 'Don't you remember Charlie?' A look of instant recognition came into Gandhiji's eyes at the mention of the familiar name Charlie, and he warmly shook hands with him and embraced him to the great amusement of all present.

Sir Tej described how on another occasion Gandhiji was invited to tea. Mrs Naidu, though she had not been invited, accompanied him in the lift and proceeded to the table where she took her seat next to him, to be greeted with 'Three cheers for Mrs Gandhi'.

'General Smuts had very high regard for Bapu,' reminisced Sir Tej. Once he was talking to Lord Peel in the presence of Sir Tej. 'He [Smuts] was very indignant at the way in which they—the British statesmen—were bungling matters. It would show utter bankruptcy of imagination and statesmanship', said Smuts, 'if the only use they had of a man like Gandhi was to shove him behind prison bars.'

30-9-48

Sir Tej recalled how when he was in the Government of India, the Bombay Government wanted to prosecute Bapu on the occasion of the Prince of Wales' visit. Lord Reading had given to Lloyd his provisional consent and wired to him to go ahead. When Sir Tej came to know of it, he opposed it and threatened to resign. He spoke to Sir William Vincent and Hignell and they both supported him, but Sir Charles Innes stood out. Later he spoke to the Maharajas of Gwalior and Bikaner and they too agreed with him. He then shut himself up in his room to cogitate and decide upon the final course. When Graham, his secretary, came to him to get his signature to some papers, he sent word that he was too preoccupied and not at home. He then sent his note to Lord Reading. 'I do not say you should never arrest him but it would be disastrous to arrest him now. He does not want that the Prince of Wales should be insulted.' Reading saw his point and countermanded his instructions. The bureaucrats were angry. At the Prince of Wales' reception, they did not recognize him although he was in uniform.

Said Gwalior and Bikaner afterwards. 'They are angry now and feel slighted but posterity will thank you for what you have done on this occasion.'

1-10-48

Sir Tej recalled how during the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations Gandhiji insisted on an inquiry being made into the excesses committed by the officials during the Civil Disobedience campaign. Irwin could not agree to it, and consulted Sapru. Sapru told him that in his position he would not accept that demand. Later he saw Gandhiji. Gandhiji was adamant. Sapru, while admitting the moral right, told him how a Government could not afford to put under inquiry its own servants who had acted under orders. But as an advocate he undertook to plead Gandhiji's cause before the Viceroy. In the meantime Irwin had sent for Gandhiji and, while conceding the moral right of the Congress to ask for an inquiry, had prevailed upon him to drop it as it would be very embarrassing for the Government. When Sapru went to see Irwin, the latter told him that he did not want his assistance as he had managed to solve that question by himself, directly with Gandhiji. 'I felt very awkward and when I saw Gandhiji later, I told him how very unfair he had been to me in yielding the point while sending me to fight the battle with Lord Irwin.'

To my question if Dr Ambedkar was right when he claimed authorship of the Minorities pact, Sir Tej replied that it was all a lie; it was the work of the India Office.

I asked him as to what attracted him most in Gandhiji and brought him close to him in spite of their difference in outlook and political ideology. 'Frankness', replied Sir Tej. I told him that it was on that score that Gandhiji's admiration for Sir Samuel Hoare also was based. Sir Tej said, 'Yes, but I differed from Gandhiji in his admiration for Hoare. It was on direct action that I could not see eye to eye with him, otherwise often we came very close indeed.' Sir Tej then described a violent quarrel he had with Sir Hoare on the question of Provincial Autonomy. (I could not follow precisely what he said as his voice was indistinct but, in the end, Sir Samuel sent for Sir Tej and made up with him saying he was not opposed to . . . the rest of the sentence was indistinct.)

After three days he let me go, but asked me to come again and gave orders that all his archives and personal correspondence from 1905 onwards be placed at my disposal. I had hoped to be able to get much more information from him, which probably no one else could have given. But that was not to be. When I saw him for the last time on the afternoon of 20 January, there was only a faint gleam of recognition in his eyes. At night, however, I learnt subsequently, just a few hours before the end, he rallied once again and remarked that he wanted to go where Gandhiji was, 'for there, there are no ailments'.

Dr Sapru was the finest product of the British liberal tradition in which our political leaders in the pre-non-cooperation era were brought up. It has been noted that since then revolutionary ardour has crowded out the solid attainments—erudition, balance of judgement, industry, hard study of facts, and healthy respect and regard for tradition, which constructive statesmanship requires, and which was so remarkably typified in his person. May his example serve as a beacon light and inspiration to the younger generation for the attainment of these qualities, which the country needs so sorely at present.

1949

Dr Radhakrishnan—The Philosopher-Statesman

In December 1947, a few weeks before Gandhiji's assassination, Dr Radhakrishnan sought Gandhiji's permission to dedicate his *Bhagavad Gita* to him. Gandhiji was at that time staying in Birla House.

'I know, you will not write anything unworthy', he said to Dr Radhakrishnan, 'but before that I want to ask you something. I am your Arjuna, you are my Krishna. I am, like Arjuna, confused.'

With these words Gandhiji placed before him certain doubts in regard to his own theories of brahmacharya. After Dr Radhakrishnan had expressed his views Gandhiji agreed to have Dr Radhakrishnan's *Gita* dedicated to himself.

This was their last meeting.

'What was your first meeting with him like?' I asked Dr Radhakrishnan.

'Bad. It was in Madras at G. A. Natesan's house, soon after his return from South Africa. Gandhiji said to me: "Don't drink milk. It is the essence of beef".'

'I replied: "In that case we are all cannibals. For we drink our mother's milk, which is the essence of human flesh".'

'The conversation then turned on medical relief. Gandhiji said: "Thousands of births take place in the jungle. They do not need any medical attention".'

'I said: "Thousands die in the jungle, too".'

'How do you know?'

'How do *you* know?'

'Natesan intervened and said: "Do you not know he is a professor of logic?"'

Thereafter they met several times—at the house of Deshbandhu C. R. Das at Calcutta, in the Ashram at Sabarmati, at

Sevagram and in Panchgani. In 1938 Dr Radhakrishnan came to Sevagram. He had planned to bring out a volume *Mahatma Gandhi—Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, on Gandhiji's seventieth birthday.

'You conveyed to me Gandhiji's message that he had no objection', Dr Radhakrishnan reminded me, much to my embarrassment. 'Gandhiji next sent me a small letter about Andhra Pradesh. He also asked me to meet Vinoba. I went to Paunar and saw Vinoba.

'Sometime afterwards Subhas Bose sent me to see Gandhiji. He was very keen on being made Congress President. I suggested it to Gandhiji. Gandhiji said: "Let him get well first." Subhas was ill at that time.'

'But Subhas says he cannot get well unless he becomes President,' I put in. Subhas became President of the Congress at Tripuri.

Going back to his last meeting with Gandhiji, Dr Radhakrishnan continued, 'But the last meeting in 1947 brought out his characteristic humility: Who am I? What is my service, etc. And then he spoke to me these words: "You are my Krishna, I am your Arjuna". It was a casual remark—not at all premeditated or deliberate. I mentioned the *Gita* and it was a spontaneous reaction on his part to use the language of the *Gita* in order to express something that was on his mind.'

2

Against this remarkable tribute by the Mahatma must be put another, the tribute that Dr Radhakrishnan received from a wholly different type of individual—Stalin. In 1949 Dr Radhakrishnan was sent as India's Ambassador to the USSR. On 14 January he and his Minister, Shri Rajeshwar Dayal and Rajeshwar Dayal's wife, Sushila, were having tea together when the telephone rang.

'It must be from Mr Stalin', Dr Radhakrishnan remarked. Sushila laughed and said, 'Impossible.'

Rajeshwar Dayal took up the receiver. Presently he came back to say that they wanted Dr Radhakrishnan himself.

The message that Dr Radhakrishnan received was: 'In October–November, soon after you took over, you went away to attend the UNESCO meetings. In December, Mr Mao Tse-

tung came and Mr Stalin was busy with him. Today is his first free day and he wants to see you.'

Knowing Dr Radhakrishnan's habits, the Russians had fixed the meeting at 9.00 a.m. instead of the usual midnight. When he went there with Rajeshwar Dayal, Mr Vyshyinsky was with Stalin. Pavlov was the interpreter. 'We had a talk. I told him', Dr Radhakrishnan recalled, 'we had an emperor who, after a bloody victory renounced war and became a monk. You have waded your way to power through force. Who knows that might happen to you also. Stalin smiled and said, "Yes, miracles do happen sometimes. I was in a theological seminary for five years".'

On 26 January, Mrs Dayal gave a reception on our Republic Day. Referring to his meeting with Stalin, Pavlov asked Rajeshwar Dayal: 'How did your Ambassador like the reception by our boss?'

'How did your boss like the meeting with our Ambassador?' Rajeshwar Dayal asked in return. 'What was the impression left on his mind?'

Pavlov said, 'His remark after you left was: "He is not a narrow patriot. His heart bleeds for suffering humanity."'

On 5 April 1952, Vyshyinsky gave a lunch for Dr Radhakrishnan. Dr Radhakrishnan was about to leave the USSR and this was the first time the Russians had organized a function for such an occasion. At the lunch Vyshyinsky said, 'The boss would like to see you.' Dr Radhakrishnan had only a few hours as he was leaving the USSR next morning. So a meeting was arranged the same night.

'Stalin's face looked somewhat bloated', Dr Radhakrishnan reminisced, 'I patted him on the cheek and on the back. I passed my hand over his head. Stalin said: "You are the first person to treat me as a human being and not as a monster. You are leaving us and I am sad. I want you to live long. I have not long to live." Six months afterwards he died.'

As they were leaving, a member of the Embassy staff who had accompanied Dr Radhakrishnan on the occasion pointed out Stalin's eyes to him. They were wet.

Being with a dictator or commoner made no difference to Dr Radhakrishnan. His understanding sympathy embraced all alike. Men went to him with aching hearts. He gave to each a word of comfort out of his profound knowledge of the *Upanishads*, the

Bhagavad Gita and other religious scriptures and they went back with their hearts a little lighter, their ache very much less. More than the savant or the scholar, was Dr Radhakrishnan the man. Embodying the temperate, well-regulated, abstemious life, which won him high certificates of merit from his physicians, he also embodied *par excellence* the ideal of 'toil unsevered from tranquility'.

3

Endowed with a giant intellect, he had a prodigious memory, too. At the time of Gandhiji's twenty-one-day fast in the detention camp at Poona during the Quit India struggle, Dr Radhakrishnan was on a visit to Chungking, the seat of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's government. Alarming reports of rapid deterioration in Gandhiji's physical condition as a result of the fast had been issued by the doctors in attendance and the British Government fully expected him to die. In anticipation of it, the British Foreign Office had even issued guidelines for the obituaries to be written in the event of his death. A telegram conveying the guidelines was handed to K. P. S. Menon, our Agent-General at Chungking, the war-time capital of China, when Dr Radhakrishnan was present. After reading it, Menon passed it on to his visitor. Gandhiji, however, cheated his jailors of the anticipated satisfaction. After Gandhiji's release, Dr Radhakrishnan visited him at Mahabaleshwar in May 1944 and scribbled for him word for word the British Foreign Office telegram. It was signed 'Eden'. It ran:

IN CASE OF GANDHI'S DEATH DO NOT DIMINISH HIS MORAL STATURE. ACKNOWLEDGE HIS UNCOMPROMISING ALLEGIANCE TO UNWORLDLY IDEAL. EXPRESS REGRET THAT HIS UNRIVALLED INFLUENCE WAS NOT AT THE SERVICE OF THE ALLIED NATIONS ESPECIALLY CHINA AND INDIA.

6.5.1944

No worthier successor could have been found than Dr Radhakrishnan for our beloved Rashtrapati, Dr Rajendra Prasad.

In a world of threatened values he may be trusted to uphold the values for which India stands and set in a world of tortuous diplomacy a shining example of the diplomacy of sincerity, straightforwardness and truth—above all, of universal love.

Shoorji Vallabhdas—A Tribute

‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle’, it is said in the *Bible*, ‘than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven’. During our non-violent fight for freedom the same, more or less, held good of the rich and propertied people in respect of their participation in the national struggle. Men with a ‘status’ could participate in the earlier ‘terrorist’ and extremist movements secretly by providing funds and other kinds of help. But in the great civil disobedience movements launched by Gandhiji there was no room for secrecy. It needed great moral courage, strength of conviction and readiness to suffer and sacrifice in order to enter the arena openly. Faced with the loss of patronage and sequestration of their worldly possessions by the government, businessmen and industrialists with large vested interests shrank from the ordeal—knowing that it might mean hardship and suffering for them personally and ruin for their businesses. But, both in South Africa and later in India, Gandhiji was able to imbue a number of propertied people with the requisite spirit of self-sacrifice, so that they were prepared to face all the attendant risks and follow him in the satyagraha struggle. Sheth Kachalia and Parsi Rustomji were examples *par excellence* of this in South Africa. Seth Shoorji Vallabhdas and Jamnalal Bajaj were among the very few who strove to follow in their footsteps in India.

A strong supporter of social and religious reform from his early days, Shoorji was an ardent Arya Samajist, with a deep interest in things of the spirit. By his business acumen he made his mark in the field of commerce and industry and finally entered the shipping line, where too he achieved remarkable success. The second civil disobedience struggle in 1932 and, again, the Quit India struggle of 1942 found him in the thick of the fight.

It is difficult to say what influenced him more—his ardent

nationalism or his personal regard for Gandhiji—to come into the satyagraha struggle. It was in Nasik Central Prison, where I served my second term of imprisonment as a civil resister, that I found myself in the company of Sheth Shoorji Vallabhdas. Before that we had scarcely met, but the spontaneous affection with which he greeted me was enough to dispel my feelings of strangeness and make me feel as if we had known each other all along.

Prison is a very sure touchstone on which the real worth of national leaders and fighters for freedom is tested. Many a popular hero is found to have feet of clay, while quiet, unassuming figures stamp themselves on those with whom they come in contact as real heroes. I was greatly struck by Sheth Shoorji Vallabhdas's quiet dignity, unfailing courtesy, refinement of bearing and gentlemanliness. With him in the same yard were Bhulabhai Desai, Mangaldas Pakvasa, Jairamdas Daulatram, Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani, the two Bharuchas and a host of other notables. Many were passing through an acute agony of doubt as to the future and the utility of the civil disobedience struggle. Some had turned 'revisionists', some others were seeking escape from the ennui of what they felt to be dull, drab, thankless, monotonous jail life, into the golden mist of alluring vistas conjured up by the creed of 'scientific socialism'. Shoorji was among those few who remained steadfast and firm on their course, undistracted by the ferment around them.

After the suspension of the civil disobedience campaign at Saharsa in Bihar, Gandhiji extended his programme of 'constructive non-violence' by adding the revival of the dead and dying village industries of India as a corollary and complement of khadi. Shoorji Vallabhdas became a founder-member of the Gramodyoga Sangh that Gandhiji set up for that purpose and for many years he ran the 'Swadeshi Gramodyoga Stores' in Bombay.

In his work for the promotion of khadi and gramodyog, Gandhiji was always anxious to win the help and cooperation of urban intellectuals, businessmen and industrialists. He never renounced them, although their activity was in some ways diametrically opposed to what he was labouring for. The cities had drained

India's villages dry. Gandhiji endeavoured to bring home to city-dwellers and the captains of commerce and industry the debt of reparation owed by the cities. History tells us that in all revolutions the most vital role has been played by the *declassed*—people who had grown up in the old order but outgrown that order and who, representing in their persons the best in the order from which they had broken, aligned themselves with and became the champions of the victims of that order. Gandhiji therefore set about harnessing the talents of the intellectual élite and other privileged sections of the urban class in the service of the five hundred thousand villages of India, on the sweat of whose brow the former lived and flourished.

The captains of industry and commerce, he saw, had business talent, technical know-how, resources and organization. It was in their own enlightened self-interest to hold and use these, not for themselves but as a trust for society as a whole, particularly the underprivileged sections of society. They would then have a balanced, well-integrated social order in which the future of the haves would be secure and the have-nots ensured a sufficiency in respect of their essential needs which, as a homely old proverb says, is 'as good as a feast'. This would be a double blessing, which would bless those who became trustees and those on whose behalf they adopted that role. Differences there would still be in the talent and performance of various people, but everybody would have an equal opportunity to develop his full potential and realize the highest realizable in life. Society would be enriched by the diversity of talent, but the inequalities inherent in nature, instead of leading to the exploitation of the weak by the strong, would be used for the progress and elevation of society as a whole.

This ideal seems to find little favour with the owners of wealth and the city élite these days. Yet I feel convinced that it alone points the way to equality without the sacrifice of individual freedom. Sometimes I feel that if Sheth Shoorji Vallabhdas had been alive today, I could have, perhaps, spoken hopefully to him for a decisive move, at least in his own person, in this direction.

Jamnalal Bajaj

After Mahadev Desai's death in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp at Pune in August 1942, Gandhiji in a reminiscent mood said, 'Maganlal, Jamnalal and Mahadev, each one of them was irreplaceable in his respective sphere'. Maganlal Gandhi had been his right hand man at Phoenix in South Africa and at Sabarmati Ashram in India. Mahadev Desai had become Gandhiji's *alter ego* ever since he joined him in 1917. Jamnalal was like a fifth son to Bapu and had looked after him and all his activities. Maganlal died in 1928 and Jamnalalji on 11 February 1942. Mahadev Bhai's death occurred in the context of the Quit India movement, within a week of the arrests, on 15 August, before Gandhiji could fully recover from the shock of Jamnalalji's death.

When Gandhiji was in South Africa Jamnalal had read about his work there. He met Gandhiji in Bombay in January 1915 when the latter returned to India with Kasturba. Jamnalal was deeply impressed by the Mahatma and their association rapidly grew into deep affection and high regard on both sides.

Jamnalal followed Gandhiji in every walk of life, be it personal, political or in the field of constructive work. As a businessman, he sincerely tried to put into practice Gandhiji's principle of trusteeship. There was no activity of Gandhiji with which he did not wholly identify himself, whether it was khadi work, the removal of untouchability, the furthering of Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition, promoting village industries, the *Rashtra Bhasha Prachar*, Basic Education or *Go Seva*. It was Jamnalalji who suggested that *Go Seva* (service of the cow) was a better term than *Go Raksha* (protection of the cow), and Bapu readily agreed with this.

In the field of politics Jamnalal was a member of the Congress Working Committee and treasurer of the All-India Congress

Committee. He was a shrewd politician, participated in the various satyagraha movements and was in and out of jails. He believed in constructive work, ahimsa and satyagraha and was a staunch 'no-changer'. He offered stiff resistance when the 'pro-changers' wanted to adopt the programme of Council-entry when Gandhiji was in jail.

Jamnalalji was the adopted grandson of Seth Bachharaj of Wardha, a well-to-do businessman, who had no children of his own. Jamnalalji was born in 1889 in the village of Kashi-ka-bas in Sikar, a principality in Jaipur state. His father Kanhiram was a man of modest means and belonged to the same village as Seth Bachharaj. Seth Bachharaj had earlier adopted a son who died soon after his marriage, without leaving any issue. Seth Bachharaj, his wife and widowed daughter-in-law thus went to their village in Sikar, in search of a child for adoption by the young widow. On their way to the village temple, Seth Bachharaj and his wife, Saidibai, saw a bright, good-looking boy of about four or five playing in front of a house. Saidibai was drawn to the child, and enquiries revealed that he was the son of Birdibai, an old acquaintance of Saidibai. So Saidibai and Bachharaj went to see Birdibai. Her husband was out, so Seth Bachharaj left the two women alone. While the women conversed, young Jamnalal came running to his mother. When Saidibai asked whose child he was, Birdibai in her innocence said, '*Ap ka hi bai*' ('He is yours') as is often said in courtesy in Indian villages. Saidibai took these words literally and when she rose to leave, she asked for the boy in adoption, much to Birdibai's surprise.

Jamnalalji's parents did not wish to give away their son, and only with considerable difficulty were they persuaded to do so. Kanhiram did not wish to part with his son, but when he heard the story of Saidibai's interpretation of his wife's words, he told her that keeping one's word was more important than life itself, as stressed by the Saint Tulsidas. Jamnalal was thus adopted by Bachharaj. When he offered to compensate Kanhiram handsomely, the latter, though poor, flatly refused to accept anything. But Bachharaj insisted, and Kanhiram then told him to have a well sunk in the village. This was done, to the great relief of the villagers who until then had been bringing water from some three or four miles away.

Seth Bachharaj and his wife took Jamnalal to Wardha, where Jamnalal had a modest education, as was customary in Marwari families at that time. He was sent to a Marathi-medium school for three years where he learnt to read and write Marwari, Hindi and Marathi. He had a smattering of English, which he tried to improve in later years. He came to have a fairly good mastery over Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and a fair introduction to English. He had a sharp intelligence, and digested well whatever he read. Jamnalalji was introduced to and trained in business procedures at an early age. By the age of thirteen he was fully absorbed in learning about the family business. Jamnalal thought a great deal as he grew older, and went on adding to his knowledge from the experiences of life. There are few who have studied and understood the book of life as Jamnalalji did.

Jamnalal was betrothed at the age of nine and married when thirteen to Janakidevi, who was at that time ten or eleven; she came from a well-to-do Marwari family of Indore. The choice was made by the family barber and brahmin priest who were sent to select a bride. They selected the pock-marked, dark complexioned, Janakidevi—the status of the family was more important than the girl's looks. The bride and groom were taken out in a procession on an elephant, and the festivities at Wardha lasted a whole week. It proved a happy marriage, with Janakidevi helping Jamnalal in all his social and national activities. She bore him three daughters and two sons and thus broke the chain of adoptions in the Bachharaj family.

Jamnalal had a keen sense of self-respect. An incident in his early life throws considerable light upon his character. Seth Bachharaj once wanted him to dress for a wedding in a particular garment decorated with a great deal of gold and silver work, and to wear jewellery as well. But Jamnalal wore a simple dress instead. This angered the old man, who scolded Jamnalal. Saying that wealth had gone to the young man's head, Bachharaj added that Jamnalal did not care for him, but only for his wealth. This deeply hurt Jamnalal. He wrote a letter to his grandfather in Marwari, which is a classic piece. In it he told the old man in clear and unequivocal terms, without a trace of bitterness or anger, that Bachharaj had a right to be angry with him because he had adopted him. However, Jamnalal did not want Bachharaj's wealth and was renouncing all rights to it. He

was leaving the house and taking nothing with him except the clothes that he was wearing. He even affixed stamps on the letter so that the document would have legal validity. Bachharaj was greatly perturbed when he read the letter. He went in search of his grandson and did not rest till he found him and, with great difficulty, persuaded him to come back. Seth Bachharaj was very careful after that, but the incident left a deep mark on young Jamnalal's mind. He always felt that he had no right to enjoy the wealth he had come by, thanks to his adoption by Bachharaj; wealth which he had once renounced. Even before he met Gandhiji he believed in the simple life, travelled third class, and considered his wealth a trust.

Seth Bachharaj died six months after the incident, and Jamnalal was then eighteen. He inherited some four or five lakhs. With his business acumen, Jamnalal increased this inheritance, but without ever doing anything unfair or unethical. In fact, he introduced many practices which benefited those who traded with him. For instance, the samples of cotton sent by suppliers to Jamnalalji's firm were sold every year for substantial sums and the money had thus far gone to Bachharaj and Company. On taking charge of the firm, Jamnalalji decided that those who sent the samples should benefit from these sales. His *munims* protested, but Jamnalalji stood by his resolve and they had to evolve a method of fair distribution of the money.

2

Jamnalal soon came under Gandhiji's influence and also made his wife and children accept the Gandhian way of simple living. She took to khaddar when it was very thick and coarse and made a bonfire of all her fine clothes. It is reported that two or three seers of gold and silver were recovered from the ashes. Jamnalal wrote to his wife, 'Now neither you nor I can use any foreign cloth. Our whole family must use khaddar and take to simple living. No foreign cloth must find its way into the family temple any more and you must see to it.' She faithfully followed his advice.

Jamnalal tried his best to become a living example of a trustee of wealth, according to Gandhiji's theory of trusteeship. He was always ready to give away anything for Gandhiji that he or his work might need. After Jamnalal's death Gandhiji wrote about Jamnalal's adoption of Gandhiji as his father:

People knew something of what this sacrament meant. But few knew the extent of the part played by the self-adopted son. Never before, I can say, was a mortal blessed with a 'son' like him. Of course, I have many sons and daughters in the sense that they have done some of my work. But Jamnalalji surrendered himself and his all without reservation. There is hardly any activity of mine in which I did not receive his full-hearted cooperation and in which it did not prove to be of the greatest value. He was gifted with a quick intelligence. He was a merchant prince. He placed at my disposal his ample possessions. He became guardian of my time and my health. And he did it all for the public good. The day he died, he and Janakidevi were to come to me. But he died almost at the very hour he should have been with me. Never before have I felt so forlorn except when Maganlal was snatched from me fourteen years ago.

Bachharaj had donated Rs 75,000 for the Lakshminarayan Temple at Wardha. He had also given a generous donation to the Marwari Vidyalaya at Wardha. He was an able, old-fashioned merchant and his grandson was expected to follow in his footsteps. The grandson greatly improved on his grandfather's performance, both in earning money and in giving it away in charity. He calculated the total wealth he had inherited and after adding compound interest to it up to the date of calculation, gave away the entire amount in charity. This he did more than once. He gave away at least Rs 25 lakhs in charity.

Jamnalal was greatly attracted by Lokamanya Tilak and, as a young boy donated Rs 100 for Tilak's *Kesari* out of his own savings from the one rupee a day which his grandfather gave him as pocket money. He used to say that the pleasure of that first donation could never be equalled by his later, much larger, donations. His association with Tilak did not go any further, but he soon came very close to Gandhiji. When Gandhiji set up his ashram, first at Kochrab and later at Sabarmati, Jamnalal started paying visits to it. He had been searching for a guru, but adopted Gandhiji as his father and not merely as a guru.

Jamnalal realized that Gandhiji had identified himself with humanity. He was a *Karmayogi* who had attained a state of equipoise. He used to say, 'No one who has had the good fortune of being Gandhiji's associate and has made an effort to understand his approach to men and affairs and attitude towards life, will ever get tired of life. He will be filled with an enthusiasm

to work and a zest for life. He will always be prepared to do his duty and be content with his lot. It may be that Gandhiji's way of attainment of Swaraj involves delay, but it is a sure way; there are no risks in it and whoever follows that way is bound to attain Swaraj for himself if not for others. That is my firm faith.'

Jamnalal sent his wife and children to Sabarmati from time to time. With Gandhiji's permission he brought Vinobaji to Wardha to start an ashram there and provide an ashram's atmosphere for the education of his children. Vinoba became a member of his family and Jamnalal treated him as his guru. His eldest daughter, Kamala, was married at Sabarmati in simple style. His son, Kamalnayan, was educated at Sabarmati and Gujarat Vidyapith and, later, put in Vinoba's ashram along with his sister, Madalsa, for a few years. Jamnalal did not send his children to government schools and colleges. His whole family later came to be identified with the national movement for independence and he, his wife and sons went to prison more than once during satyagraha movements.

3

Jamnalal always played host to Gandhiji and other national leaders who came to see him or Gandhiji; his home at Wardha had become a virtual guest-house for Gandhiji's guests.

As early as 1917, when Jamnalalji was just twenty-eight, he was given the title of Rai Bahadur. He accepted it after consulting Gandhiji. A British officer sent for him and warned him against his association with Gandhiji and other Congress leaders. The conversation went somewhat like this:

'Do you see Mr Gandhi quite often?'

'Yes sir.'

'Is it true that Congress leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Nekiram Sharma and others stay as your guests?'

'Yes sir.'

'You are aware that you are regarded as a respectable gentleman and Government esteems your services.'

'Yes sir.'

'This means that a special responsibility rests on you and Government expects that you will carry it out.'

'That is perfectly all right. But Government must know that I have nothing to do with the political opinions of those who stay

with me as my guests. If you have any reports regarding my political views and if you want any explanation from me regarding them, you may ask for it. But if Government thinks that I should not entertain guests who are my friends, whether they agree with my political views or not, it is not fair. No self-respecting person can submit to such arbitrary desires of Government.'

'Quite so, quite so', said the official in a persuasive tone. 'It is quite true that no harm would be done by your associating with Mr Gandhi, because you are quite reasonable and wise. But it may affect other people adversely and so you must be careful.'

Jamnalal was not impressed by such talk. He retorted, 'It is my duty to treat my friends with hospitality when they come to me as my guests. As for Gandhiji, I have the greatest respect for him and I can never sever my relations with him.'

This was sufficient provocation for the official. Some time earlier, Jamnalal had requested the Chief Commissioner to perform the opening ceremony of the new building of the High School at Wardha. The official said, 'If your attitude is to remain as it is, the Chief Commissioner will not be able to comply with your request.' Jamnalal replied, 'That depends on his pleasure. I cannot change my attitude merely to suit his wishes.'

The official was much put out. Banging the table, he blurted out, 'After securing a Rai Bahadurship you have started making friends with the nationalist leaders. You want to benefit by the friendship of both.'

Jamnalal refused to be provoked. He said calmly, 'I never asked for any Rai Bahadurship and even before it came to me unsought, my relations with Congress leaders were exactly as they are now.'

'Very well. You may settle the whole matter with the Deputy Commissioner of Wardha', said the official, rising in his chair as if to conclude the talk.

Jamnalal retorted, 'There is no question of any settlement. My friends will be my guests hereafter as before.'

Later, Jamnalal gave up his Rai Bahadurship during the Non-cooperation Movement. He also withdrew all his pending cases from the courts, according to the programme to boycott law courts. It resulted in losses in some cases, but he settled most of them out of court through arbitration.

Jamnalal often regretted that his father had given him away in adoption to Bachharaj. That adoption was without his consent as he was too young at the time to understand it, but his adoption of Gandhiji as his father was a deliberate, well-thought-out decision on his part. Once Bapu wrote to him addressing him as 'Bhai Jamnalal' instead of 'Chiranjiv Jamnalal', the usual form of address by a father. Jamnalal was hurt by this and wrote to Gandhiji, 'Am I no longer fit to be your son?' Bapu wrote a lengthy reply:

Chi. Jamnalal,

Your grief has made me sad. I avoided the use of Chi. in the letter to you because it was not closed; and because I could not decide on the spur of the moment as to the propriety or otherwise of the prefix Chi., as applied to you, being read by all those who happened to see the letter. So, I used the prefix Bhai.

How are we to arrive at a decision as to whether you deserve to be Chi. (i.e., my son) and whether I deserve to be adopted as father? Just as you have misgivings about yourself, I have similar misgivings about my own self. If you are imperfect, so am I. I ought to have given more thought to my own qualifications before allowing myself to be adopted as your father. I have, however, yielded to your affection and I have taken the place of your father. May God make me worthy of that privilege. If any defects or deficiencies persist in you, they will be taken as the defects of my own contact with you.

I am confident that both of us will achieve success in our effort to remove our shortcomings. If, however, we fail, God, who wants in us a spirit of dedication and can look into the inmost recesses of the heart, will deal with us according to our deserts. I will, therefore, consider you as Chi. as long as I do not deliberately harbour impurity within myself.

Gandhiji's increasing association with him was a great moral and spiritual influence on Jamnalal. He became more and more introspective.

Gandhiji had returned to India in January 1915 from South Africa. At the end of the year he attended the Congress Session at Bombay, where Jamnalal had arranged for his stay at Marwari Vidyalaya. Gandhiji had to see many personalities to explain to them the case of South Africa, but, as there were no taxis in those days in Calcutta, Jamnalal purchased a new car and placed it at Gandhiji's disposal. He was constantly observing Gandhiji and always found him unruffled, considerate, peaceful

and optimistic. Later, he recorded his impression of Gandhiji in these words:

For the last 24 years I have been constantly associated with Gandhiji; during this period I have closely watched his activities in all fields of work. I have travelled about with him, I have also participated in his ashram life, I have stayed near him during his fasts, I have been nursing him during his illness. I was witness to his many important negotiations and discussions, and I have tried my utmost to share the burden of his public activities. At every stage I was continuously influenced by his many qualities. My faith in him went on increasing. I went on identifying myself with him more and more. Today he is my ideal and my guiding star whose command I obey. His affection is my life.

In 1920 Jamnalal was unanimously elected Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Nagpur Congress. He was most reluctant to accept the honour and wanted it to go to a more mature and better educated man, and suggested the name of Ravi Shankar Shukla. Mahadev Bhai wrote to Jamnalal on behalf of Bapu that he should accept the Chairmanship. 'Your objections on the score of young age and ignorance (of English) are not acceptable to Bapu. He thinks you can certainly prepare your speech in Hindi and an English version of it could be kept ready for distribution.'

Jamnalal's speech as Chairman of the Reception Committee was very well received. In it he said, 'The more and greater our difficulties, the more onerous will become the responsibilities of the Congress; and the more Swaraj-conscious we become, the greater will be our self-confidence and the nearer Swaraj will come.' On the political situation, he observed:

The British Government is clearly guilty of a breach of the pledge given in regard to Khilafat. Instead of granting responsible Government to India, the Government has passed a Reforms Act which has been declared inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing by the Congress; and immediately in its train was passed the Rowlatt Act which gave a perfectly free hand to the police to persecute the people. All these events have opened the eyes of the Indian people and they have come to the conclusion that their condition is becoming worse and worse under British rule. There are only two ways out of this impasse: open armed rebellion or universal non-cooperation. Armed rebellion is inconsistent with India's culture and way of life. It is only non-cooperation which is acceptable and suited to our circumstances. I am wholly confident that we shall attain Swaraj by non-cooperation and we do not want any foreign help. Let us

remember what great sacrifice have been made for freedom by Ireland, Russia and China and prepare ourselves for similar sacrifices.

Addressing the business community he said:

I have a special claim on my brothers of the business community on this occasion and I wish to make a special appeal to them. Whatever we have earned under British rule has been earned not by enriching our country or countrymen but by making our Motherland and her children poorer. The consequence is that about ten crores of our countrymen cannot have one square meal a day. Fellow-businessmen, our trade, industry and commerce will flourish a hundred fold by our participation in the great national endeavour for Swaraj. We must give up our attitude of indifference and we must shed our fear complex. If we do not do the right thing on this occasion, we shall shut the doors of prosperity to our future generations and we shall be committing a moral crime against the nation. We must sacrifice our earnings in this great national effort for freedom in the eternal interest of future generations.

The Congress leaders realized that young Jamnalal was a real acquisition for the freedom movement. He was made a member of the Congress Working Committee and Treasurer of the All-India Congress Committee, posts which he occupied till his death in 1942.

Someone once maligned Jamnalal by saying that as Treasurer of the Congress he was benefiting from Congress funds. Jawaharlal Nehru as General Secretary of the Congress issued a statement which silenced the critics. He said that the accounts of the Congress were meticulously kept and audited and statements of accounts were published in newspapers from time to time. The whole credit for it went to Jamnalal Bajaj who was Congress Treasurer. Nehru threatened that the Congress would go to court to vindicate its honour if malicious and defamatory statements continued to be made.

5

Jamnalal was a businessman, a factory owner and a capitalist. But he had great sympathy for his workers. An arbitration board had been set up to adjudicate upon disputes between mill owners and the workers of textile mills in Ahmedabad. Gandhiji represented the workers. When he was too busy with political or other work, someone else had to take his place. Gulzari Lal Nanda was a labour leader in Ahmedabad at that time. He wrote to Jamnalal on 26 March 1926 to take Gandhiji's place

even though he was an employer himself: this gives an idea of the faith people had in Jamnalal's integrity.

Jamnalal was asked to preside over the shop-assistants conference in Bombay in 1937. Commenting on this incident, Gandhiji wrote:

To have the Conference presided over by Jamnalalji who has numerous shop-assistants in his employment, is significant, because Jamnalalji knows in his heart no distinction between a Seth and a servant, and his shop-assistants, cooks, coachmen and other servants are treated as members of the family. He knows that they need leisure as he needs it, he knows that they need a holiday occasionally as he needs it (but rarely takes it), he knows that they need to live with their wives and children in fair comfort, in clean and well-ventilated habitations, and be capable of looking after their own and their children's educational and medical needs, even as he needs to do so. And he also knows the wretched lot of the average shop-assistant, sweating for ten to thirteen hours, without a holiday, on a miserable salary, having to go on leave, if he can get it, without pay, losing every day in health, living a life without cheer, an eternal grind from morning till night.

As President of the Charkha Sangh, Jamnalalji was expected to wear only khaddar. As we have already seen, he went further and introduced khaddar in his family and also in the family temple. However, he also wished to run a model textile mill according to Gandhian principles and to demonstrate that it could run economically, without exploiting the workers. He thus decided to enter into an agreement to purchase a textile mill on behalf of his company.

Janaki Devi, his wife, was much perturbed by this decision. There might be no logical inconsistency in the arguments advanced by friends in favour of Jamnalal running a textile mill, but she saw a moral inconsistency in this and consulted Gandhiji. 'A khaddar propagandist', she said, 'could not become a producer of mill cloth'. On 27 September 1934 Gandhiji wrote to Jamnalal:

Vallabhbhai informs me that you are about to buy up a textile mill. . . . The news did give me a shock. It seemed to me incongruous for one who has so deeply interested himself in khadi to become a mill-owner. I could not, however, make up my mind to write to you anything about it. In the meanwhile, Janakimaiya came to see me yesterday. A great load is off her mind as the Madhyama examination, for which she appeared, is over. She is, however, ill at ease ever since she heard of this proposal. 'For whose

benefit can this incubus be?' she asks. The children, too, do not approve of it. The servants say: 'Now that the master is going to have a mill of his own, he won't ask us to put on khadi.' No one has liked this step. Do, therefore, give up the idea. If the bargain has already been made, you may withdraw your share from it. The other partners are free to purchase it, if they wish. If you are only in need of a business, there are many other avenues open to you. If you need more earnings for charitable purposes, we can very well do without such charity. Om twits me by saying: 'You prompt Kakaji to purchase a mill because you want more money for the Congress, don't you?' What answer can I give to them all? If possible, do convey by wire the happy news of cancellation.

In the meantime Jamnalal too had been cogitating on whether or not he had taken the right decision; he finally made up his mind not to purchase the mill. Gandhiji was greatly relieved. He wrote to Jamnalal: 'I was relieved to learn that you have been saved from the encumbrance of the mill. The scare of that wolf coming gave me a fine demonstration of the mentality of Janakibehn and the children. It delighted me to see them all agitated so much. We may wish this spirit to abide with them for ever.'

Jamnalal's spiritual quest led him to severe self-criticism. When Gandhiji was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and was confined in Yeravda jail in 1922, most of his followers did not know what to do during his absence. Under such difficult circumstances Jamnalal gave the lead by organizing the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha, and by further promoting khadi. He was always anxious to serve the causes dear to Gandhiji and gather together all those who had faith in Gandhiji, his idealism and his methods of work. To that end he founded an association called the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1923. It was to be an organization of only those who believed in truth and non-violence and who pledged themselves to carry on Gandhiji's constructive programme. Jamnalal was its first President. In 1934 he resigned. Later, he resigned his membership as he felt he was not fit for membership of the Sangh in the light of the strict rules that had been laid down. Kishorelal Bhai Mashruwala, who was then President of the Sangh, tried to persuade him not to resign, but Jamnalal stood firm by his decision. He wrote to Kishorelal from jail.

The more I see my shortcomings, the more clearly my mind tells that I am not fit for a high and sacred institution like the Gandhi Seva Sangh. For

once, kindly relieve me. . . . Because I was aware of my shortcomings, I did not adopt Bapu as my guru nor treat him as such, but I have certainly treated him as my father. . . . You forget that the other four sons of Gandhiji are also not in the Gandhi Seva Sangh. What special merit have I that I should continue to be a member? . . . At first, out of pride, I thought that I had understood Bapu and his principles. But on deeper consideration, I see clearly that I had not understood anything.

This letter illustrates Jamnalal's increasing introspection, self-criticism and humility, a sign of spiritual growth and development.

6

Janakidevi herself went to jail several times and her sons Kamalnayan and Ramakrishna also had that invaluable experience. At the time of the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 a camp to train satyagrahis for the nation-wide campaign was set up at Ville Parle in Bombay. Kasturba and Janakidevi helped with the training. The Government confiscated the camp after some time, and many of its workers were arrested. Kasturba advised Janakidevi not to court arrest and, instead, proceed to Bihar and Bengal to carry on the crusade. Janakidevi did as advised and was accompanied by her two younger daughters, Madalsa and Uma, in this tour. She addressed many meetings in her simple, straightforward manner, urging workers to break the Salt Laws, buy and use khadi and picket liquor shops. As a result, her name was often seen in the newspapers. Bapu wrote to her from jail on 27 July: 'Nowadays, I see your name in the papers. Sometimes I feel that Jamnalal and I should continue to remain in jail so that you may go on with your good work outside. I am confident that behind your apparent lack of confidence there was the background of full self-confidence. May God strengthen it.'

On 1 February 1932 Janakidevi was arrested and given six months' imprisonment. At Wardha, Bajajwadi was confiscated and a fine of Rs 1,000 imposed. For non-payment of the fine, the Government had the iron safes removed from Jamnalal's house. No one in Wardha agreed to remove the safes despite the handsome remuneration offered. Finally, when the police removed the safes on their own, no one would bid for them in the auction. The Government did not open the safes, which were restored to the family after the Gandhi-Irwin truce.

When leaving Sabarmati to start on the Dandi March, Gandhiji had vowed that he would return to the Ashram only after winning Swaraj. As is well known now, he went on a self-purificatory fast for 21 days in the context of his Harijan work and was released from Yeravda Prison in 1934. Swaraj was still far away. For one year Gandhiji fully devoted himself to working for the removal of untouchability and toured all over India. Jamnalal's youngest daughter Uma was with him on this tour.

Jamnalal had been urging Gandhiji for some time to make Wardha his headquarters, while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wanted that honour for Bardoli. Jamnalal had been very keen to develop Wardha as a full-fledged Gandhian centre and had already secured the services of Vinoba to start an ashram there. He had also founded a number of educational institutions at Wardha, including the Mahila Ashram for the shelter and education of women and girls from the families of workers who had gone to jail. At first Gandhiji refused to stay in Wardha and Jamnalal could only persuade him to agree to spend one month every year there. In 1935 Gandhiji decided to stay longer at Wardha, so Jamnalal placed at Gandhiji's disposal his spacious garden house on the outskirts of the city. This site was later named Maganwadi by Gandhiji, in memory of his late nephew Maganlal Gandhi. I spent a few days at Maganwadi during my summer vacation that year and accompanied the group which had taken up sanitation work at Sindri village. I remember how the villagers merely pointed out to us where the excreta was, but never joined us in removing it!

In 1936 Gandhiji decided to move from Wardha to Sevagram, which was called Segaoon at that time, in order to work closely with its people. Gandhiji had set up the Gramudyog Sangh or Village Industries Association with the help of the Kumarappa brothers while he was at Maganwadi. Both J. C. Kumarappa, the talented economist, and his brother Bharatan Kumarappa, devoted themselves to the work of the Gramudyog Sangh with Maganwadi as their headquarters. When Gandhiji moved to Sevagram in 1936 Maganwadi continued to be the headquarters of the Sangh. Jamnalal greatly helped the Gramudyog Sangh with finance and his business acumen, as he had done earlier for the Charkha Sangh and its khadi work.

At Sevagram, too, Jamnalal put up buildings and donated land. He did all that was needed to develop the site for Gandhiji's stay there and to carry on the village work that Gandhiji wanted to undertake. In later years a dispensary and, still later, the Kasturba Hospital were added to provide medical care for the villagers. I was able to play a small part in this. So far as I know, Jamnalal had made himself responsible for all the ashram expenses.

In 1937 Jamnalal wanted to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Wardha Shiksha Mandal, of which he was President. Gandhiji had been writing a number of articles in *Harijan* on his concept of education. Shriman Narayan suggested that an education conference might be called in the context of the Shiksha Mandal's celebrations. This was agreed to by Bapu. Shriman Narayan, a bright young economist and an educationist, who had married Jamnalal's second daughter, Madalsa, played a leading role in organizing this conference, but he fell ill at the time of the conference. E. W. Aryanayakam, a Christian and an educationist from Sri Lanka, and his wife, Ashadevi, a brilliant Bengali educationist, both of whom had worked at Santiniketan with Gurudev Tagore, had been invited by Jamnalal to Wardha to work for his Nav Bharat Vidyalaya, had to carry the burden of the conference, which was a great success. They became the pillars of the Basic Education Movement or Nai Talim. They left the Nav Bharat Vidyalaya and shifted to Sevagram to have the benefit of Bapu's day-to-day guidance in their Nai Talim work. Dr Zakir Husain, who was the head of the Jamia Millia at Delhi at that time, became the first President of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. Jamnalal again came forward and extended all help to this new activity of Gandhiji. Sevagram became the headquarters of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and from there the Basic Education movement was developed and spread all over the country.

7

In 1934 or 1935 Jamnalal had invited me to spend the summer vacation with him and his family at Bhowali near Naini Tal. I was a medical student, my mother and brother Pyarelalji were both in jail. I had a problem when everyone had to vacate the college hostel during the vacation. Jamnalal had promised to

take me to see Kamala Nehru who was under treatment in the sanatorium at Bhowali, but she had been taken away to Switzerland by the time I arrived. So I never saw her. To compensate me for the disappointment, Jamnalal took me to see Jawaharlal, who was in Naini prison, on our way back. My name was entered as Jamnalal's daughter, Miss Bajaj, in official files. It was an honour for me to go to see Jawaharlal. He and his brother-in-law, Ranjit Pandit, were both in Naini prison at that time and we were taken right inside the prison to their barrack to meet them. They were both very warm and affectionate with me and Panditji said, 'The thing that one misses most in prison is the company of children.' Ranjit Pandit added, 'She reminds me of my Lekha.' I was very happy with the visit. Panditji took us to the garden at the back of their barrack to show us the large sunflowers that he was growing, each flower almost 9 inches in diameter. He hoped to make them still larger. He talked politics with Jamnalalji during the half hour that we met.

While I was at Bhowali Jamnalal went on long walks, and Madalsa and I accompanied him. Every morning he walked to Sat Tal, nearly seven kilometres down the hill from Bhowali. Madalsa and I would race down the hill, but coming back was rather tiring. The daily visit to Sat Tal also had a broad religious purpose, for Jamnalal would hear the lectures of a Christian Missionary, Stanley Jones, which were delivered there. He had truly imbibed Bapu's message of equal respect for all religions.

Before the end of my vacation, Jamnalal took us all to Almora. The journey could be done on horseback, so some members of the group rode, while others walked. I walked most of the way, but Jamnalal walked the entire distance. All along the route many Congress workers came to meet him from the villages that we passed. Jamnalal must have informed them of his programme; he knew them all by name, and made inquiries of each worker about his family, his domestic problems in general, and he extended help and advice to everyone who needed it. He told me one day that he was a specialist: just as doctors could look after people's health problems, he could diagnose and set right their economic and social problems.

Jamnalalji had offered to help our family too. My mother was very unhappy that Pyarelalji, her eldest son, had left home to join Gandhiji. My father had died while I was an infant, leaving

her to take care of my two elder brothers and myself. She had hoped that the eldest, who was fourteen or fifteen years old at that time, would help her in looking after and educating the younger two, Mohanlal and I. Jamnalal was ready to deal with our economic problems as he had done for Dr Rajendra Prasad, Kishorelal Mashruwala and others, but my mother was too conservative and proud to discuss her private affairs with anyone. So he gave up. But he continued to take an interest in me and my studies.

Jamnalal was always looking out for workers for Bapu's various activities, and also for suitable matches for unmarried or potential workers among the children of the older ones! He arranged so many marriages that he was often called 'Shadilal' in jest. It was important to him that Bapu's workers should have suitable life-partners, so that the two could help each other and together could serve Bapu and the nation.

The simplicity of Jamnalal's family life was most impressive. When I spent my summer vacation at Bhowali, Madalsa was not wholly well and her mother decided to stay with her in the hills for some time. They were on the look out for a suitable place near Almora. Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and her husband, Ranjit Pandit, had a house at Binsar near Almora. They offered its use to Jamnalal. We stayed in the main house for one night, but then Janakidevi selected an out-house, which had been used by the Pandits to keep poultry in. She had it cleaned up, and mother and daughter, with one or two servants, lived there after Jamnalal and the rest of the party left for the plains.

8

Two satyagrahas were led by Jamnalal, the Flag Satyagraha of Nagpur in 1923 and the Jaipur Satyagraha in 1938-9. Both were very well organized and totally successful.

Early in 1923, when Gandhiji was serving a six years' sentence in Yeravda Prison, the citizens of Nagpur organized an impressive national flag procession in the Civil Lines. Thousands of people joined the procession with the tricolour fluttering in their hands and many hoisted the national flags on their homes. To the authorities this seemed a wanton display of defiance; the processionists were attacked and their flags forcibly snatched away. The citizens of Nagpur were in no mood to submit to the

police action and decided to display the flag again on a massive scale during the week, from 6 to 13 April. The Government clamped a ban on the display of the flag and on meetings in the Civil Lines. The procession, which had been planned for 13 April, came under this prohibitory order. Gandhiji was in Yeravda prison and Jamnalal was on his way back to Wardha from Calcutta when a deputation of volunteers met him at Nagpur railway station and apprised him of the situation. They wanted to offer resistance on the flag issue and asked Jamnalal to lead them. After some thought, he accepted the challenge, and led the movement in a big way.

The Flag Satyagraha created great enthusiasm; volunteers from outside Nagpur started pouring in; there was a lathi charge on the procession followed by arrests. Jamnalal was arrested and officially given 'A' class status in prison, but he ate the food of 'C' class prisoners along with the other volunteers. Maulana Mohammad Ali wired, 'Well done, my brave Bania. Long to touch your feet. Kitchlew joins.' Congratulations poured in from Rajaji, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Dr M. A. Ansari. Jawaharlal Nehru had some reservations earlier, but ultimately he too gave his whole-hearted support to the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha.

The Satyagraha continued for several weeks and over 500 volunteers went to prison. The Nagpur jails were full and many Satyagrahis were transferred to jails in Akola and Amravati. At last, by August, the authorities relented and the prohibitory orders were withdrawn. On 18 August 100 satyagrahis marched to the Civil Lines proudly carrying the national flag aloft, even before the withdrawal of the prohibitory order. They were left alone and were not interfered with by the authorities. The Satyagraha had achieved its object: the satyagrahis were released soon after. When Jamnalal was offered a car to take him home he preferred to walk with the volunteers and thousands joined them. It made a grand procession, and was followed by a large public meeting.

In December 1938, when Jamnalal was on his way to Jaipur to organize famine relief work with the help of Praja Mandal workers, the Prime Minister of the state, an Englishman, apprehensive of Jamnalal's growing influence in the state, served a

prohibitory order on him at Sawai Madhopur railway junction while Jamnalal was waiting to take the train to Jaipur. Gandhiji was at Bardoli at the time, and Jamnalal could consult him. All attempts at explaining his position to the Jaipur Maharaja and his officers, as advised by Gandhiji, failed. Jamnalal finally gave the authorities notice that, if the ban was not lifted by 31 January, he would break the law. He did so and was promptly arrested and put in solitary confinement at Moransagar. His health suffered a serious setback during this imprisonment. He was in pain and his blood pressure was very high. The doctors advised treatment for his arthritis and blood pressure in a spa in Europe, but Jamnalal refused.

During the Jaipur satyagraha 500 volunteers had courted arrest, many of whom were women. The authorities finally saw that the people's movement could not be suppressed for long. Gandhiji had also written to the Viceroy, who moved in the matter. The English Prime Minister of Jaipur had in the meantime been replaced by an Indian, and Jamnalal, along with other volunteers, was released on 12 August 1939. The ban on public meetings and processions was withdrawn and administrative reforms were promised by the Prince.

Jamnalal could be tough and outspoken to the extent of upsetting people at times, but everyone knew that he had no malice. He was most generous and helpful to everyone, big and small, and was always a genuine friend in need. His one failing, perhaps, was a desire for fame. He knew that this was an obstacle in the way of his spiritual growth and was constantly endeavouring to overcome the weakness.

After Jamnalal's release from Jaipur jail, Gandhiji insisted on his going to Shimla for a change. On his way back he went to Dehra Dun to meet Anandmayee Ma at Bapu's suggestion. She was Kamala Nehru's guru. Bapu knew that she had given great solace to Kamalaji and also knew of Jamnalalji's great need for similar solace. Thus Jamnalal's spiritual quest led him to Anandmayee towards the last period of his life. He went to see Anandmayee several times thereafter and, on his last visit asked her to tell him the time of his death. She did not wish to do so, but he insisted. He said he would not eat or drink anything, not even water, till she answered his question. She then told him to make preparations and take precautions for six months.

Bapu had started the Goseva Sangh in the meantime and had entrusted this work to Jamnalal. After his last visit to Anandmayee, Jamnalal shifted to a hut in Gopuri near Nalwadi and devoted himself to *Goseva* and spiritual *sadhana*. It was an ascetic life. He was alone. Food was sent to him. At first Janakidevi too was not allowed to be with him and he did everything by himself. He let Janakidevi join him later, so that she was with him for some time before the end.

10

On 11 February 1942 Jamnalal rose early in the morning as usual, said his prayers, and tended his cow. He went to his ancestral home in Wardha for lunch, and was to see Bapu at Sevagram that afternoon to discuss arrangements for Chiang Kai-shek's impending visit. After lunch, he rested for some time, but soon felt sick. He lay down on the thick mattress on the floor, but soon became unconscious. He died within fifteen minutes, almost at the moment when he and Janakidevi were to see Bapu. His six-month period of caution and preparation was coming to an end, and Jamnalal was getting ready to come out of his self-imposed seclusion. He did come out of it, but to go to a wider world.

When Gandhiji received the news of Jamnalal's illness he at once went to see him. But by the time he reached, Jamnalal had died. Gandhiji sent a letter to various colleagues on 14 February 1942 to convene a meeting and discuss ways and means of continuing Jamnalal's work. The letter throws a flood of light on Jamnalal's interests and Gandhiji's views on voluntary constructive work. Bapu wrote:

You are aware how intimate was my relation with Jamnalalji. There was no work which I did in which his full co-operation in body, mind and wealth was not available. Neither I nor he was fond of what is known as politics. He entered politics because I was in it. But my real politics was constructive work. And his politics also was the same. I had hoped that after me he would fully carry on those works of mine which would be regarded as of special importance. He had also assured me to this effect. But God alone can fulfil man's wishes. Our wishes were not fulfilled. My faith teaches me that in this apparent defeat, success is assured. Whatever it be, I have now to consider who will take up the work of Jamnalalji and how. You are being put to trouble to discuss this problem and if possible to find out a solution for the same. There cannot be any compulsion behind this invitation. A list of those subjects in which Jamnalalji had taken special interest is appended herewith in chronological order. If you can take part

in these activities and if it is possible for you to come, then do come. If you cannot come, there is no need for you to come for the sake of courtesy.

In case you are unable to come in spite of your interest in these activities, please write how and in which item you would like to actively associate yourself. The meeting and discussion will take place on 20 (Friday) February 1942 at 2 p.m. It will facilitate matters if you will please send a wire in case you are able to come. A list of the invitees is also enclosed. Only the names of those whom we could remember are given. If some are left out, it is due to oversight, and they should obtain an invitation.

Janakidevi had wanted to become a *sati* by mounting Jamnalal's funeral pyre. Gandhiji held her back. He told her to be a real sati by doing his work. She devoted herself and donated all her assets worth Rs 2.5 lakhs for this work. His son, Kamalanayan, followed in his father's footsteps to the best of his ability. He looked after his father's business and took an interest in constructive work as well as in politics. He was a member of the Lok Sabha for two terms. He died of a heart attack in Raj Bhavan at Ahmedabad on 1 May 1972, where he had gone to visit his sister, Madalsa, and her husband, Shriman Narayan, then Governor of Gujarat. It was a big blow for Janakidevi. She tried to lose herself in *Goseva* and Vinoba's Bhoodan. She realized that land was of no use to the poor unless they had water, so she used her old contacts to collect money for the sinking of wells, which she named *Koopdan*. Janakidevi died of pulmonary tuberculosis on 21 May 1979 at Wardha.

After his retirement as Governor of Gujarat, Shrimanji took up educational work and other constructive activities at Wardha. He had been a member of the Lok Sabha from 1952 to 1957 and was General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee for many years. He became a member of the Planning Commission, and later, when Lal Bahadur Shastri was Prime Minister, he was sent as India's Ambassador to Nepal. After that, he became Chairman of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. He died on 3 June 1978. Madalsa and Jamnalalji's younger son, Ramkrishna Bajaj, are doing all they can to keep the candle burning by continuing to develop the educational and constructive programmes in Wardha.

Kishorelal Mashruwala— A Beam in the Darkness

Kishorelal was born in Akola in 1890 in a middle class family of deeply religious businessmen. The name Mashruwala is derived from the business of *mashru*, cloth made of silk and cotton yarn, in which his forefathers were engaged. His father was however a teacher, although later he went back to business, dealing not in *mashru* but in linseed and cotton.

The Mashruwala family were pious Vaishnava Hindus, but Kishorelal's grandfather had become a follower of Swami Sahajananda, the founder of the Narayanswami sect. The Narayanswami sect was a reform movement which tried to rid the Vaishnava faith of certain superstitions. It also accepted low-caste Hindus and even non-Hindus as its followers, which was resented by the orthodox. They tried to browbeat the Mashruwala family by ostracizing them, putting obstacles in the way of their business and refusing to marry their daughters to the young men of the family. The Mashruwalas had therefore to seek their brides outside Surat. When Kishorelal's brother was to be married, the girl's parents even put pressure on the Mashruwalas to give up their allegiance to the Narayanswami sect.

It seems that the followers of the Narayanswami sect found the persecution by the business community and ostracism by the priests distinctly oppressive. Kishorelal's grandfather thus filed a suit against his oppressors when the British set up their courts of justice in India. Even though a compromise was reached out of court, the court case had however dragged on for six years and involved a great deal of expenditure, and weakened the financial position of the Mashruwala family to a considerable extent. Even so, Kishorelal's grandfather was able to educate all his sons. Kishorelal's father took up a teacher's job, and his

uncle Machharam was the founder of a newspaper called *Desh Mitra*, which he edited till the end of his life.

When the Salt Tax was imposed for the first time in Surat, there were disorderly protests and violence, which resulted in the arrest of several people. One of the cases filed was against Machharam, and other leaders. The Mashruwala family arranged for their defence and employed very able lawyers like Mr Gill and Pherozechah Mehta. Mr Gill's fee was Rs 1,000 a day. This case also put considerable financial strain on the Mashruwala family.

But these incidents show that the Mashruwala family was an educated and forward-looking one, and provided an intellectual atmosphere for the younger ones to grow up in. They were also patriotic and knew how to fight for their rights.

The Mashruwala family moved between Bombay and Akola twice every year and the children had to change schools accordingly. At Bombay they could not be re-admitted to the same school each time, which caused further dislocation. This situation lasted until Kishorelal was seven years old, when he lost his mother and began to live with his maternal grandmother at Bombay.

After completing their fifth class, Kishorelal and his brother, Jaggu Bhai, were admitted in New High School at Bombay, which was considered a very good school and where Kishorelal formed a couple of life-long friends. His grandmother and mother's sister showered all their affection on him as the youngest boy, and he generally stayed with them.

After three years in New High School, the brothers were shifted to Gokuldas Tejpal High School, where the fees were a little lower. Kishorelal was very sorry to have to leave New High School and his newly-found friends there. After two months in Gokuldas Tejpal High School, Kishorelal fell ill with malaria; and older brother took him to Agra and had him admitted in St John's Collegiate High School, where Kishorelal studied for two years and learnt Hindi and a little Urdu. On his return to Bombay he was admitted in Esplanade High School from where he passed the Matriculation in 1905. His close friend Mangaldas Gordhandas and several other students had also shifted to Esplanade High School and Kishorelal was delighted to be once again with his old friends. Unfortunately, Kishorelal's brother

Jaggu died of plague around then, an event that deeply saddened Kishorelal.

Kishorelal joined Wilson College after his matriculation and hoped to win a scholarship there: he had applied for a scholarship from his caste fund too. He had been sanctioned Rs 25 a month, a handsome sum in those days; but he preferred to have a college scholarship, which he did get, and stopped taking the caste scholarship. He has written that without a scholarship he might not have been able to go through college. Kishorelal did well in college and stood second or first in his class, though he was never higher than tenth in school. He passed his Intermediate with a first class and also topped his class. Similarly, he passed the second-year LL.B. with a first class. In June 1913 he passed the final LL.B. examination, became a lawyer and set up practice in Akola. When still a law student, Kishorelal had started working in the firm of Mehta and Dalpatram, Solicitors, as an articled clerk. He was the first articled clerk in the firm, so that both the solicitors gave him their full attention and trained him thoroughly. They then entrusted him with the work of the managing clerk. Kishorelal has written: 'Mehta Seth was very strict. I once made a mistake in writing an affidavit. There were similar names in two cases and I entered the wrong name. Mehta Seth gave me such a scolding that I cried for three hours. But the trouble he took in teaching me stood me in very good stead.'

Kishorelal was disinclined to get married but, persuaded by his maternal aunt, he was engaged to Gomati Behn in the winter of 1907; on 30 March 1913 he and Gomati Behn were married. Soon after the wedding Kishorelal fell ill with influenza: Gomati Behn looked after him night and day. He was introduced to antiphlogistin plaster on the chest during this illness, and antiphlogistin became his life-long companion thereafter. Kishorelal practised law for three years and prospered. He also took an interest in public activities in Akola, as the Mashruwala family had always done. Gandhiji was then in the thick of satyagraha in South Africa and the papers carried news of his work there, as also of the proceedings of Parliament in London. These gave rise to stimulating discussions in Mashruwala's home in which many friends would join. They professed different religions and some did not believe in any religion.

In 1916, Kishorelal's brother, Balu Bhai, asked him to come to Bombay and help him in his business. The financial condition of the family had improved and Balu Bhai's business had expanded. He was getting work from some Japanese companies and had recently come to know Jamnalal Bajaj, who had also promised to give him contracts. Kishorelal thus wound up his practice at Akola and joined his brother at Bombay. But he could not be of any help to his brother. The cotton business did not suit his temperament or physical condition. He had suffered from one or two bouts of breathing difficulty at Akola. In Bombay he had his first full-fledged attack of asthma, from which he suffered for the rest of his life. Both Kishorelal and Gomati Behn were in poor health and nursed one another, but the major share of nursing fell to Gomati Behn.

Kishorelal's elder brother, Balu Bhai, who looked after their father's business, insisted on sending money for Kishorelal's expenses in later years; Kishorelal accepted a living wage from Bapu's ashram. This hurt Balu so much that Kishorelal had to stop it and accept what his brother sent him.

Kishorelal had heard Bapu's name for the first time at the age of thirteen, while a schoolboy in Bombay. Bapu's eldest son, Harilal, was in his class. One day their Sanskrit teacher was talking with the students. Harilal said that he would soon leave the school and go to South Africa, where his father was a barrister and was running a weekly in English, Gujarati and Tamil. This was Kishorelal's first introduction to Gandhiji.

Ten years later, when he was a practising lawyer in Akola, the satyagraha in South Africa was in its last intensive stage and the newspapers were full of it. The Viceroy and Gopal Krishna Gokhale had supported Gandhiji. Meetings were being held everywhere in India and funds collected to support the South Africa struggle under Gandhiji's leadership. Kishorelal also took part in fund collection as a young, enthusiastic lawyer. This was his second introduction to Gandhiji.

Four years later, Kishorelal was in Bombay when he heard of a meeting in support of ending the system of indentured labour; this was to be addressed by Gandhiji. Kishorelal and his brother attended the meeting. After the meeting Bapu went for a walk on Juhu beach and they followed him. H. S. L. Polak, who was with Gandhiji, noticed them and remarked, 'The faithful two'.

When the brothers went home they received a message from Thakkar Bapa that Gandhiji was coming to the house occupied by the Servants of India Society and they could come there. They went. There were Gandhiji, Thakkar Bapa, Shankerlal Banker and one or two other people. The brothers sat in chairs in the back row and listened to a discussion on the proposed construction of houses in Sabarmati Ashram. Bapu wanted to put up mud huts. Thakkar Bapa had taken to public service, but he was an engineer and argued that the repair and maintenance of mud huts would cost as much as the construction of *pucca* houses. Bapu felt that even if mud huts had to be rebuilt after about ten years they should be preferred. Shankerlal Banker opposed the proposal on different grounds. He did not want Indians to always live in mud huts. He wanted every Indian to have a decent *pucca* house and the putting up of mud huts in the ashrams, he felt, would be setting a bad example. Ultimately, the ashram had *pucca* buildings and Bapu's wish to live in thatched huts could only be fulfilled when he moved to Sevagram.

A couple of days after this incident there was a scavengers' meeting in the Servants of India Society building. Kishorelal and his two brothers attended it. It was their first experience of sitting with Hindu untouchables, although they had often sat with Christian Harijans. After the meeting, Balu Bhai had a bath because he had not done his *puja* yet. Nana Bhai said he had finished his *puja* and had his meals, so he would merely change his clothes. Kishorelal was content to wash his face, hands and feet.

'After some time I again met Thakkar Bapa in the Servants of India Society building. He showed me a letter from Bapu written from Champaran asking him to send some volunteers. He asked me if I would be able to go there and I said yes', records Kishorelal. His brother was reluctant, but he gave Kishorelal permission to go. Gomati Behn was willing, if he would take her also, but he did not feel that would be feasible. This caused unpleasantness between the two, but he left for Bettiah by train the next morning. When he met Bapu on arrival there, Bapu told him to go to the Ashram and start teaching at the local Rashtriya Shala. Balu Bhai's letter had also arrived by this time expressing concern about Kishorelal's health and asking for Bapu's permission to send Gomati Behn to join him. It

became clear to Bapu that Kishorelal was not fit for work in Bettiah, but he saw the potential in Kishorelal and was insistent that Kishorelal should join the ashram as a teacher. Kishorelal promised to let him know his decision after consulting his family. 'But he had already caught me in his net,' Kishorelal recorded later.

On his way back to Bombay, Kishorelal made a pilgrimage to Swami Sahajanand's birth-place. On reaching Bombay, he consulted his family about Bapu's proposal. Gomati Behn had no objection if he would take her with him, but Balu Bhai did not want him to leave. Ultimately, it was decided that Kishorelal should be allowed to go initially for a year on an experimental basis. Kishorelal knew no one in the ashram. He had not taken to inter-caste dining at that time and when travelling he would eat only fruit. He did not wish to have his meals in the common kitchen in the ashram. A friend of his knew Narhari Bhai Parikh, who had joined the school two months earlier. He had taken a house near the school and invited Kishorelal to stay with him, which Kishorelal did till he got a separate house for himself.

Kishorelal turned out to be a very good teacher. He prepared the time-table for all the classes. He prepared himself to teach even the junior-most class and decided beforehand about new material he would instruct students on. He was also a popular and effective teacher. The school was one of Bapu's experiments in education. It was at first run in a bungalow near the Kochrab Ashram and later shifted to Sabarmati. At Sabarmati they lived and worked in tents before the buildings came up. In the rainy season several problems had to be faced by the housewives. Thus, in 1917 when the rains were very heavy, Gomati Behn and Kishorelal had to work hard to keep moving their household goods to a dry spot. Kishorelal insisted on working like everybody else, even when he had asthma, so much so he was often found panting. He walked to the Swaminarayan Temple on Sundays and festival days and this was quite tiring.

In 1918 the five older students of the Ashram school walked to Abu with Kaka Saheb Kalelkar and Vinoba, while the ten younger children were taken there by train by Kishorelal and Gomati Behn. When coming back, Kishorelal and Gomati Behn walked with the older boys. They looked after the students so well during the trip that the students became devoted to them.

In spite of all this, Kishorelal's keen sense of self-introspection and self-criticism made him feel that he did not know how to teach. He was deeply aware that parents and teachers should set an example for the children in their own lives.

There was an inner restlessness in Kishorelal, a spiritual hunger which made him feel that he should run away from the world and be all by himself. Bapu could not persuade him to give up the idea. Kaka Saheb had introduced Kishorelal to Nathji, whom Kishorelal later acknowledged as his guru. Nathji saw that Kishorelal be allowed to remain by himself. A hut was selected for him not too far from the Ashram. Bapu went to see him there once a day and Gomati Behn sent him his food. After some time he felt he had to go away from there too. Nathji insisted on accompanying him. They went to Abu and had long discussions. At last one evening, sitting on a hillock at Abu at sunset time and listening to Nathji's discourse, Kishorelal suddenly said, 'My doubts are gone. I am at peace.' The next day they returned to Sabarmati Ashram and Kishorelal went home to his wife and his normal life. In 1927 Kishorelal had gone to Madhi Ashram to rest by the sea-side when there were severe floods in Gujarat. He readily jumped into the flood relief work. He became very ill soon afterwards and went to Akola to recover his health. His elder brother Balu Bhai was also unwell and he too went to Akola for the same reason. But Balu Bhai never recovered, and died in 1928. When Kishorelal was better, he felt that, if he stayed in Bombay he would be available to his nephews when they needed his help. He therefore started working at the Rashtriya Shala at Ville Parle. This school was soon converted into a camp for the training of satyagrahis. On 6 April Jamnalalji, Kishorelal and others offered satyagraha by making salt, and they and Gokulbhai Bhatt, the leading worker of Ville Parle, were arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Kishorelal was given A Class treatment at first, but on being taken to Nasik Jail he was put in B. There were many socialists and communists with him in Nasik Jail and long discussions took place. The communists held classes on communism; so Kishorelal and his companions also started holding classes, but on Gandhian thought. They made a list of points on which Gandhian and communist thought were similar and where the two differed.

Gomati Behn too had been very keen to go to jail. But she had to wait in the Ville Parle camp for a long time. She was at last arrested and given four months' sentence and placed in C class. In 1931, as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, all the satyagrahis were released—thus Kishorelal and others with him were freed on 8 March 1931, long before they had completed their terms.

The Ville Parle camp was continued because no one thought that the Gandhi-Irwin truce would last. At Gujarat Vidyapith a seven-month course was worked out under the name of Swaraj Vidyalaya, and at the Ville Parle camp a course called Gandhi Vidyalaya was started. The task of imparting Gandhian thought to students was entrusted to Kishorelal. Out of this endeavour came his book *Gandhi Vichar Dohan*, which is considered a classic.

Gandhiji was arrested once more on 1 April 1932 and a day later all the important leaders throughout the country were rounded up. Kishorelal was also arrested with the others. After the Magistrate had read out his sentence, Kishorelal, who had been to jail several times, made a significant statement:

I have not been inspired to offer civil disobedience out of mere loyalty to Gandhiji or the Congress. I know the result of this new conflict will be very serious. By nature I am a peace-loving man; I dislike conflict by temperament. That the weakest nation in the world has thrown up a challenge to the mightiest Empire and has come forward to sacrifice itself for a noble cause, does not send me into an ecstasy nor does it make my blood boil with anger. However, on deep thought I have come to the conclusion that as a servant of humanity and as a devotee of God, it is my duty to offer satyagraha against British cruelty and oppression. I feel that at this time pure sacrifices are needed. The British authorities have refused to accept India's claim to live with self-respect and work to save itself from starvation. Not only that, they have decided to crush all those who make such a claim. This is bad for Britain. I believe I am a well-wisher of Britain and if I perish in my attempt to save Britain from the path of self-destruction, I shall be happy.

Kishorelal had asked for khadi clothes in prison in 1930 and when he could not get them, he gave up eating evening meals. The Deputy Superintendent of the jail asked the satyagrahi prisoners to spin fast and give him sufficient yarn which could be made into cloth. They did this in two weeks and the jailor had it woven into khadi and supplied khadi clothes to Kishorelal—after which he resumed his evening meals!

Kishorelal was rearrested on 4 January 1932 and sentenced to imprisonment, the jailor presented him with his old khadi clothes, so there was no problem again on that score. Kishorelal was first taken to Thane Jail and then to Nasik. He was in poor health and spent most of the time in the jail hospital. When Bapu went on a fast against the Government's Communal Award, he wrote to Kishorelal and asked for his opinion. Kishorelal understood Bapu's reasoning and agreed with his decision to go on a fast. This pleased Bapu. Kishorelal was released on 5 October 1933, after completing his term. Though an independent thinker, Kishorelal had also absorbed and was deeply influenced by Bapu's ideas.

In 1934, after Jamnalalji resigned from the Presidentship of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, Bapu chose Kishorelal for that post. On getting his consent, Bapu announced Kishorelal's name on 29 November 1934 and the announcement was welcomed by everyone. The new constitution of the Sangh was formulated during the next ten days and the first All-India Conference of the Sangh took place at Sevagram.

There were lively discussions when the Act of 1935 came into force as to whether members of the Sangh, standing by truth and non-violence, could fight the election and take the oath of allegiance to the King-Emperor when they were really rebels at heart. Bapu said that they could do so, as the British Constitution was so elastic that it even allowed the legislature to remove the King. Kishorelal could not accept this and wanted to resign from the Presidentship of the Sangh, but Bapu told him to continue. Kishorelal was afraid that the prospect of holding office would also create several problems. Bapu felt that this need not happen if they strictly adhered to the principle that only those invited by the Congress to stand would fight the election. He said the Sangh could not ignore the three crores of voters by refusing to take part in the election.

In actual practice, difficulties and dissensions did crop up as a result of members of the Sangh participating in the elections. It was therefore decided at the sixth annual conference of the Sangh at Malikanda in 1940 to suspend the Gandhi Seva Sangh for the time being and revive it when the right person to lead it could be found. Kishorelal had been insisting for some time on

resigning on health grounds, and now Bapu was not inclined to ask him to continue. The work of the Sangh had involved a great deal of travel all over India, and Kishorelal had done an excellent job as President, but it was putting a considerable strain on him. As there was no one to take his place, the Gandhi Seva Sangh went into suspended animation for an indefinite period and no one has thought of reviving it even now.

Kishorelal was again arrested in the course of the 1942 Quit India movement. Gandhiji, the Congress Working Committee and other leaders were arrested on 9 August 1942. Kishorelal was asked by activists whether non-violence would allow them to cut off communications, loot banks or set fire to Government offices. Kishorelal clearly answered that they could not indulge in looting and arson, but felt that, if careful and there was no loss of life, they could cut off the telephone and telegraph wires, remove railway lines and demolish bridges. They would have to do these things in non-violent self-defence if the Japanese invaded India. They should behave as if the British were not there and set up their own administration. Strikes and non-violent picketing also were permitted. But Kishorelal added that truth and non-violence were the two sides of the same coin, as Bapu had always insisted. They should therefore not do anything secretly. This precaution would have prevented all objectionable activity, but it was not observed.

The British Government used Kishorelal's writings to prove that the Congress and Gandhiji had encouraged violence. In his reply to the Government pamphlet *Congress Responsibility for Disturbance*, Gandhiji wrote that the Government's interpretation of Kishorelal's writing was wrong. Kishorelal had not preached violence. At most, he could only be said to have made an error of judgement. The best of generals could make mistakes, he said.

Strangely enough, on the very day that Gandhiji wrote the above letter to the Government of India, Kishorelal also wrote on his own to the Home Secretary of the Central Provinces Government that he should have clearly told the activists that they could not cut communications, as he had told them they could not take part in loot and arson. He was not writing to defend himself, otherwise he could have added that the idea of cutting communications and organizing strikes had been taken

by him from Amery's speech. He was writing merely to be true to himself and to clear his own conscience.

After Bapu's death Kishorelal took up the editorship of the *Harijan*, *Harijan Bandhu* (Gujarati) and *Harijan Sevak* (Hindi). His writings had an incisive clarity and were greatly appreciated in India and abroad. He wrote about current social and political problems, the distribution system as well as production, as also about the growing corruption. He wrote on and gave support to Vinoba's Bhoodan Movement and non-violent revolution. Almost his last article was a courageous piece in which he made the suggestion that no one should henceforth put forward ideas in Gandhiji's name. They must say that the ideas were their own. As Kishorelal's physical frame became weaker and weaker, his intellect and spirit shone brighter and brighter through his writings.

On his last day he worked till 5 p.m. Then his condition started deteriorating. He became breathless. Gomatibehn sent for friends and relatives. Kishorelal passed away on 9 September 1952 at 5.45 p.m.

Pyarelal wrote on his death:

So, Kishorelal Bhai has joined the galaxy of revered names which included Maganlal Gandhi, Jamnalalji, Mahadev Bhai and finally Gandhiji himself. They all lived up to the ideal of the Karmayogi envisaged in the *Gita*—performing their duty even with their last breath. It is a consummation which every Satyagrahi must aspire to, but it is given to very few indeed to realize it. Those who witnessed the agony of physical suffering which was Kishorelal Bhai's lot of late, wondered at the will power and unconquerable spirit which enabled him to transcend his physical disability and gave him his serenity and equipoise which nothing could disturb. For a considerable time, his life had become a veritable bed of thorns. But as the physical frame wore away more and more, the spirit within seemed to feel freer and freer and gave to the near-burnt-out candle's dying flicker the brilliance and sparkle which obscured from many the sad reality behind it. In a letter to a friend written a few days before the end, he wrote: 'I am almost at the end of my life and have been losing interest in worldly matters. Perhaps the way. . . . I still write strong articles might make readers think that even if my energy is waning, my interests are as keen as ever. But I think that it is the life-long habit and my intellectualism that are responsible for this apparent contradiction. Inwardly, I am sick of all activities and want to retire.'

One of the everlasting regrets of Kishorelal Bhai was that he could not go

into physical action on account of his ill-health and serve the cause as a field-worker. But he circumvented that disability by investing his thought with all the intensity of his being, so that his thought became almost like an act.

His writings became a synonym for vigour and clarity of thinking. But even more precious than the crystal clearness and incisive vigour of his thought was the charity and breadth of outlook which inspired it. I do not know of any of Gandhiji's associates, barring Vinoba Bhave, who has realized in his life the quality of ahimsa as Kishorelal Bhai had done. It made him the cementing bond and unifying force in Gandhiji's wider family after Gandhiji's death. I am afraid we shall all miss it more and more as time passes. We need to cultivate his catholicity of outlook and charitableness, his equipoise and detachment, his humility and self-effacement and above all his unmatched integrity, more than ever.

Though many knew Kishorelal Bhai, comparatively few, I am afraid, had the privilege of knowing Gomati Behn, his brave and faithful helpmate, who shared in full the penance and renunciation on which his life was forged. She is of the stuff of which heroines are made. Coming from a rich, cultured family, she did not find life easy when she first joined Sabarmati Ashram, to live with her husband under canvas, where dogs claimed priority over the inmates as occupants and diners. But she persevered and refused to look back and Gandhiji made her, along with three or four other Ashram ladies, write their experiences in *Navajivan* to serve as an example to other women. I have known of very few instances of such harmonious merging of husband and wife in a great common cause as was exemplified by Kishorelal Bhai and Gomati Behn. It made their home an abode of purity, penance and peace. I have no doubt she will bear the loss that God has sent her, with fortitude and faith. When the full history of India's non-violent freedom struggle comes to be written, the contribution made to it by the brave women such as Gomati Behn, Durga Behn (Shrimati Mahadev Desai), Kashi Behn (Shrimati Chhaganlal Gandhi) and others—with Kasturba Gandhi at the head—whom Gandhiji had filled with the power of the basic Ashram disciplines—will be accorded a fitting place. None of them were 'educated' in the sense in which the expression is generally understood these days, but it is my firm conviction that on our capacity to evolve that type of womanhood depends India's destiny and her future place in the world.

Kishorelal Bhai's death brings back to my mind the words of advice which Gandhiji uttered to the workers and members of the staff of Santiniketan after Gurudev's death. No single individual, he said on that occasion, could take Gurudev's place—Gurudev was born only once in an age—but if they all resolved to put the cause first and themselves last, they would to a very large extent be able to collectively fill the void created by Gurudev's passing away. Kishorelal Bhai's life was a living example of the practice of that precept. May it serve as a beacon light to us all.

Gomati Behn survived her husband for almost three decades. She lived in Akola and Bombay with the members of her family—her husband's brothers' children and their families. One of Kishorelal's nephews was married to Manu Gandhi, daughter of Gandhiji's eldest son, Harilal. One of his nieces was married to Gandhiji's second son, Manilal. Thus there was a closeness of the two families in social and spiritual areas. She was bed-ridden in her last years, but she always had a smile to greet you with.

1985

SUSHILA NAYAR

Kumarappa As I Knew Him

It was my privilege to have known Dr J. C. Kumarappa from the moment he entered Gandhiji's world, almost till death claimed him. It would be difficult to find a more devoted, sincere, straightforward and fearless co-worker or crusader in a noble and worthy cause. Gandhiji was a man of intuition. His intuition sprang from a life-time of striving, and practising the law of love with all its corollaries. The great truths that came to him in a blinding flash he presented to his co-workers in their stark simplicity, without attempting to clothe them in the garb of theory. This part of the business and relating them to current ideologies was left to a set of dedicated colleagues and interpreters. One of the foremost among them was Kumarappa. An economist of high order, he could meet orthodox economists on their own ground and put across to them in terms of their own science the ideas that Gandhiji had conceived. Rural reconstruction had mostly been talked about in the sense of urbanizing the countryside, mechanizing rural crafts and industrializing agriculture—in short, the introduction of urban values, an urban economy and an urban way of life in the villages. The villages would then exist merely as feeders for and providers of raw materials to the urban industrial population and as consumers of its surplus manufactured goods. What Gandhiji aimed at was the preservation and reinstatement in their rightful place of the village way of life and the values that go with it. He was out to free the village economy from the dominance of not only urban technology and urban finance but also urban values and the urban way of life. This could not be done by providing the villagers with, as Pandit Nehru once put it, 'all the amenities of city life', but by freeing them from dependence on urban amenities by developing a different set of amenities, more suited to the rural environment, which would cost much less, and also enable the rural economy to successfully compete with the

urban. It was this concept which Kumarappa put forth in terms of modern economic thought with a versatility and originality all their own.

An ideology based on vested interests cannot be overthrown by appeal to reason alone. Intellect is a handy maiden. *Buddhi*—reason—has been described as *karmanugamini*. It follows in the footsteps of our way of life. Much modern economic thought is a product of class thinking, an instrument of class conflict, calculated to provide a rationalization of the way of life from which it has sprung. A heavy onslaught of logic can overwhelm the opponent, but it cannot change his thinking. For that we need to get behind the other person's defences and overcome his resistance by a readiness to unreservedly accept his standpoint as his truth, instead of wishing to prove the truth of our assertion and force it down his throat. Perhaps it was the lack of this quality, that made Kumarappa's 'economics of peace' so militant and his pacifism so aggressive.

However, to mention this is like pointing out the spots in the sun. It does not detract from the worth either of the man or of his achievement. But the law of truth and non-violence is inexorable. It cannot, it will not, allow itself to be ignored.

Kumarappa's indignation over the raw deal that the toiling masses have received in the so-called 'free world', and his compassion for them, led him sometimes to overshoot the mark. One such occasion was when he compared and equated communism with 'Gandhism, if we leave out truth and non-violence'. Joining issue with him, I put to him my difficulty. While I could wholeheartedly and unreservedly commend the ideals of social justice for the oppressed toilers of the world and a classless society in which all are equal, these ideals were not exclusive to communism. Besides, I had often been told by my communist friends that communism is not merely an economic or a social doctrine but a 'technique of action' for the establishment of a classless society by setting up a dictatorship of the proletariat through minority action and liquidation of all opposition. Therefore, the seeming resemblance in the ultimate goals of Gandhism and communism did not justify putting the two in the same sack. Finally, I asked him if he had considered what remained of 'Gandhism' if truth and non-violence were taken out of it. To this I never received any reply.

That, however, made no difference either to our mutual love or my deep regard for, and admiration of, him as an original thinker. Those who were not privileged to come into intimate touch with the human side of Kumarappa often misjudged him. He was not the highly efficient computer, crammed with statistics and printed electronic circuits, that they took him to be. With the simplicity and innocence of a child he combined a big, kindly heart, a keen sense of humour and the capacity to take life's blows with fortitude, dignity and courage. The hidden scars that he carried from the battle of life marked him out as a hero.

The last occasion that I met him was in the Madras General Hospital. He was confined to bed for high blood pressure, but he utilized his illness and hospitalization to serve the cause to which he had dedicated his life; he converted the corridor leading to his ward, and even the walls of his ward, into a museum of Gramodyog philosophy, with charts and maps and related literature filling every inch of available space. Through the window from his bed could be seen the outline of the college where he had studied. With a far look in his eyes he recalled nostalgically the dreams that had filled his soul in his college days and he shared with me his supreme satisfaction at having been able to live them in his life. 'Here is the poet Wordsworth's Happy Warrior', I said to myself,

Who When brought,
Among the tasks of real life has wrought
Upon the plan that filled his boyish thought.

India needs men of Kumarappa's abstemiousness, purity and self-renunciation, independence of mind, catholicity of outlook in religious matters and spirit of dedication to the service of the motherland. I have a feeling that if he were in our midst today, he would have been of great help in reshaping our national economy, now that the thaw has begun, and become a pillar of strength to the Sarvodaya movement.

J. C. Kumarappa was born on 4 January 1892 in an orthodox Christian family of Madurai. His father, S. D. Cornelius, was an officer of the Public Works Department of the Government of Madras and posted at Tanjore, where Kumarappa was born as the ninth child of his parents. They named him Joseph Chelladurai Cornelius. In 1928, when a student in the USA he changed his name to his family's earlier Hindu name, Kumarappa.

Kumarappa's mother was deeply religious; she led a life of piety and helped those in distress. She was well read for her generation and had a deep influence on J. C. Kumarappa. J. C. was fond of pet animals as a child. She encouraged him in looking after his pets and to breed chickens, guinea pigs and turkeys. When she went to the market to buy her monthly stores, she took him with her to buy chicken-feed. He sold the eggs and had to keep accounts of the profit made, which was turned over to her for her charitable works, such as support for a school for orphans. When J. C. grew up and began earning, he, along with his other brothers and sisters, had to send tithes to their mother, which meant not the mathematical one-tenth of their income, but whatever she thought should be contributed by each in the light of the needs of her charities. Her children also collected funds from their friends for these charities.

J. C.'s father was a strict disciplinarian. His love for the children did not prevent him from using the rod when he thought it necessary. He saw to it that the children were well clothed, went to the best available school and applied themselves to their studies. He would inspect their nails to see that they were well pared and clean. Thus, both parents played an important role in the development of J. C.'s character and personality.

Thanks to his father's enforcement of discipline and the habit of study, J. C. earned double promotions and was a good student, being particularly bright in mathematics, even if somewhat weak in history. After the headmaster of his school pulled him up and told him to work harder on history, he obtained honours in history and mere pass marks in mathematics in the matriculation examination. This created problems, for J. C. wanted to take up mathematics as his major subject in college so

that he could do engineering later. But the principal of his college insisted that he do history because of his high matriculation marks in the subject. J. C. thus had to give up the idea of becoming an engineer. He then took up economics and went in for auditing and accountancy.

Kumarappa qualified as an incorporated accountant in London, and established himself as a successful auditor in partnership with a British firm. He was thoroughly British in his ways and his mother feared that he might not return to India. In 1919 she wrote a pleading letter to J. C.'s partners to send her son back to India. This they managed to do, and Kumarappa came home to set up practice in Bombay in partnership with Ford Rhodes and Parks, a firm of auditors. In 1925 he parted from them and set up an independent practice under the name of Cornelius and Davar.

J. C.'s eldest brother persuaded J. C. to visit him in the USA for a holiday. The holiday occurred in 1927, but soon J. C. became restless and wanted to do some solid work. He joined Syracuse University, from where he took his B.Sc. in Business Administration in 1928. In 1929, on the advice of his professor, W. Peck, J. C. joined Columbia University to study public finance. His principal professor in Columbia, Dr E. R. A. Seligman, had seen a *New York Times* report about a lecture, 'Why then is India poor', delivered by Kumarappa in a church. The substance of the lecture so impressed Seligman that he insisted Kumarappa write his Master's thesis on the 'Causes of India's Poverty Through Public Finance'. This study convinced Kumarappa of British injustice and exploitation in India, and from being pro-British he became a nationalist. It was in this context that he adopted his original family name, Kumarappa.

Participating in a Columbia seminar on 'The Economics of Enterprises', Kumarappa rejected the view that the purpose of production was to increase purchasing power and that no moral values or social considerations should be allowed to come into play. There was a heated argument between him and Professor Davenport, who had organized the seminar and whose work formed the background material for the seminar. Kumarappa's friends feared that, as a result of this encounter, he would lose

credits; but the Davenport recognized his ability, original thinking and honesty of purpose, and gave him an A grade.

In 1929, after getting his Master's degree in economics, Kumarappa returned from the USA and went back to his practice in Bombay. A friend suggested that he should show his Columbia thesis to Gandhiji before having it published. Gandhiji was only a name to him at that time, but, at his friend's insistence, Kumarappa decided to meet Gandhiji who was then visiting Bombay. He went to see Gandhiji at Mani Bhavan on Laburnam Road in Gamdevi; the door was opened by Pyarelal, who said that Gandhiji was busy in a Working Committee meeting and would not be available for some time. Kumarappa left his manuscript with Pyarelal, who later telephoned asking him to see Gandhiji at Sabarmati on a certain date.

Kumarappa went to Sabarmati and was shocked to see the bare guest house and Indian-style lavatory. The appointment was for the afternoon and he impatiently waited for it to be over so that he could go back to Bombay. To pass the time, he went for a walk on the banks of the Sabarmati and was charmed by the natural beauty. On his way back to the guest house he saw an old man sitting on a clean, mud plastered floor, spinning on a spinning-wheel. Having never seen a spinning-wheel, Kumarappa stood watching it, leaning on his walking stick. He still had ten minutes before his interview. After about five minutes the old man looked up and, with a toothless smile, asked him if he was Kumarappa, who said, yes, and in turn asked if he was speaking to Gandhiji. Gandhiji nodded. Kumarappa sat down on the mud floor by his side, oblivious of his well-creased trousers. Some one rushed up with a chair, but Kumarappa refused to sit on it while Gandhiji sat on the floor.

Gandhiji had read the manuscript and liked it. He said he wanted to serialize it in his weekly journal, *Young India*. He said J. C. was the first economist whose views agreed with his own, and asked if he would help him with a rural survey. Kumarappa pointed out the language difficulty. Gandhiji said the professor and students of economics at Gujarat Vidyapith would help him with that. He sent him to the Vice-Chancellor, Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, who looking at J. C.'s Western attire, discouraged him, saying that language would be a real difficulty. J. C. went back

to Bombay in a huff and wrote to Gandhiji that he would be glad to help in any way he wished, but Kaka Saheb did not think he would be of any use. A reply to this letter promptly came from Kaka Saheb requesting him to return to Sabarmati and undertake the work suggested by Gandhiji. Years later, talking to J. C., Gandhiji said, 'Kaka was not able to size you up when he first met you. But the moment I saw you, I felt "There is a young man, I must grab".' And he got him into his net.

After J. C.'s return to Bombay, Gandhiji asked him to write for *Young India*, and he started doing so. J. C. felt that he should change his dress to suit his inner transformation. A friend advised him to go to the khadi bhandar and get *dhoties* and *kurtas*. He went there and asked to be measured for *dhoties*. The Khadi Bhandar manager smiled and told him *dhoties* were not made to measure. A 47-inch width should suit him. He came home with half a dozen *dhoties* and *kurtas*. Dr John Mackenzie, who later became Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, heard that J. C. was thinking of working with Gandhiji and adopting Indian dress. Mrs Mackenzie happened to invite J. C. to tea the day he put on his new dress. Kumarappa accepted the invitation, donned his *dhوتي* with the help of a Maharashtrian friend, his *kurta* and *chappals*, and went to the Mackenzie's house. The moment he saw Mrs Mackenzie, he bowed and took off his Gandhi cap. She laughed heartily and clapped, remarking that, along with the change of clothes, J. C. must learn Indian manners too. 'You must not pull off your cap in greetings, but throw off your *chappals* and fold your hands.'

Soon after J. C.'s meeting with Gandhiji, Gandhiji undertook the Dandi March. After Gandhiji's arrest the trustees of the Navajivan Trust invited J. C. to take charge of *Young India* as its editor. He agreed. Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai were both in prison, but J. C.'s writings landed him, too, in jail before long. After that, there was no going back to his practice in Bombay. Kumarappa became a member of Gandhiji's family.

As editor of *Young India* Kumarappa published his letter to the Metropolitan of India, in which he quoted from the scriptures to prove how wrong it was for Christians to support the Government of India against Gandhiji, who was practising the teachings of Jesus.

He wrote:

I have not met Gandhiji since the campaign started, but I know that the brutalities perpetrated on one of the least of the people, will be an immeasurably greater torture to him than any that his 100 pounds of human flesh can be submitted to. The satyagrahis follow Christ even to the court of the present day Pilates who, rather than do justice and resign, stick to their posts and carry out the wishes of the powers that be. The satyagrahis take no part in the proceedings even as Christ refrained.

Through his erudite writings, Kumarappa was able to change the attitude of the Church towards the national movement to a considerable extent.

Kumarappa's articles received wide publicity. Many newspapers and journals reproduced them. He strongly criticized the brutalities of the police against the satyagrahis and exposed the wrong doings of the jail official he came to know when in prison.

In March 1931 Kumarappa came out of jail under the Gandhi-Irwin pact. The Karachi session of the Congress that year appointed a select committee, with Kumarappa as its convenor, to examine the financial obligations between Great Britain and India up to that time. Kumarappa's *Public Finance and Poverty* had proved his mastery of the subject. The other members of the Committee were Professor K. T. Shah and two former Advocates-General of the Bombay High Court, D. N. Bahadurji and Bhulabhai Desai. The committee worked with speed under great pressure and produced a report which was most revealing. It showed how expenses for wars which had no relation to India had been charged to India's account. Soldiers taken to the front to help the British war effort were taken at India's expense, and foreign soldiers brought to India were also paid from Indian funds. In this fashion, Britain owed India Rs 1805.5 crores against wrongly debited bills. The Committee's report concluded:

The history of the British occupation of India, since the East India Company acquired political power, is a history of ever-growing material gain in wealth and prestige to Great Britain. On the other hand, the result to India has been that its industries were destroyed or suppressed and India has become a market for the manufactures and other products of Great Britain. Without the growth of that market and the use of India's wealth in her efforts to develop her industries, Britain's present position

would never have been anything like what it has grown to. India has also provided a vast field for the employment of Britishers in all grades of civil and military service and even if only the salaries and pensions paid were totalled up, the figures would be colossal. In addition to her actual material gain, her growth as a great world power was mainly due to her possession of India. These facts by themselves should be sufficient reason for transference of all existing liabilities by way of public debts from the shoulders of India to those of Great Britain from every moral and equitable point of view.

The report had repercussions on the financial markets, and the London markets were adversely affected when it was published.

Kumarappa again became editor of *Young India* when Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai went to the second Round Table Conference in August 1930. It resulted in his second imprisonment, this time for two and a half years.

Early in 1934 India suffered a great disaster in the form of the Bihar earthquake. Relief work had to be organized on a very large scale and Rajendra Prasad, who became the first President of free India in 1952, had to bear the brunt of this work. Gandhiji asked Jamnalal Bajaj to help Rajendra Prasad by taking up the treasurership of the relief committee. Money and materials were pouring in from all parts of India and account-keeping was an important and difficult task. Jamnalalji asked for Kumarappa's help. Gandhiji agreed to this, and Kumarappa did an excellent job: he would not tolerate the slightest discrepancy, and laid down strict rules for workers' expenditure on food and travel. He did not even pass Gandhiji's bills when he went to Bihar and as presented by Mahadev Desai, for they did not fall within the rules.

Rajendra Prasad has written in his autobiography:

It will be no exaggeration to say that had he not come here and organized the accounts in a thorough-going manner we would have landed in difficulties. We had no less than 2,000 workers spread over 12 districts and only a few of them had any idea of keeping accounts. There were various kinds of work and separate accounts had to be kept for each. The work had taken such vast proportions that it was difficult to manage it. But when Kumarappa's method was adopted everything became all right. When the people showed enthusiasm beyond all expectations and money began pouring in, I was afraid that the public may feel that their confidence

was misplaced. But thanks to Kumarappa and the band of workers under him, the work could be carried on to a successful termination. I had appointed a local bank as our cashier. Every day more than 200 or 300 money orders were received. Parcels containing all sorts of articles were pouring in every day. Besides, other remittances were received either by us direct or by the bank. All these had to be accounted for differently.

In the relief centres, money and these articles were distributed. All these accounts had to be maintained by the central office. A few days after I took up responsibility, I published a report of the work. To this I appended a list of donors. This list alone exceeded 400 printed pages. After this report was out, I appealed to the public to inform me if any names of donors had been omitted. I got about 10 or 12 replies to this appeal. The names that were said to have been omitted were not exactly omitted, but printed under some other province or state. After seeing this I was wonderstruck at the meticulous way in which our accounts had been maintained

In that one year the Bihar Relief Committee had to handle Rs 26 lakhs in donations. In the Central Assembly, when one member remarked that the funds of the Bihar Earthquake Relief Committee had been loosely spent by Rajendra Prasad, Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress party in the Assembly, challenged the member to prove his charge and placed a set of neatly bound audited statements of accounts on the table of the House. Rajendra Babu was overwhelmed and remarked: 'Kumarappa has really saved the honour of Bihar.'

Swadeshi had become the popular slogan in India after the Partition of Bengal. Gandhiji made a distinction between 'political Swadeshi' and 'genuine Swadeshi'. Political Swadeshi meant an artificial barrier on the flow of goods from one place to another and imposed by the political division of the world, he said. It could not contribute to world peace. These artificial barriers would ultimately foster wars between countries. He felt the need for 'genuine Swadeshi'. It meant denying 'to ourselves the enjoyment of goods not manufactured with our approval and within our knowledge'. Gandhiji held that only thus would man become fully sensitive to the social repercussions of each of his transactions, and pave the way for world peace.

Gandhiji's view was that goods manufactured by Indian mills were not genuine Swadeshi. Many leaders did not share his views. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was in favour of patronizing all

Indian goods. The Swadeshi League, with Malaviyaji as its president and Lilavati Munshi as its secretary, were working to that end. Gandhiji called a conference at Banaras. He stressed his view of Swadeshi, but it was not accepted by the other side. Malaviyaji and Gandhiji both agreed to accept Kumarappa as the arbitrator. His verdict went in Gandhiji's favour.

On 27 October 1934 the Indian National Congress passed the following resolution:

Whereas much confusion has arisen in the public mind as to the true nature of Swadeshi and whereas the aim of the Congress has been from its inception progressive identification with the masses, and whereas village reorganization and reconstruction necessarily implies revival and encouragement of dead or dying village industries besides the central industry of hand spinning, and whereas this work, like the reorganization of hand spinning is possible only through concentrated and special effort unaffected by and independent of the political activities of the Congress, J. C. Kumarappa is hereby authorized to form, under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, an association called the All-India Village Industries Association as part of the activities of the Congress . . .

When Kumarappa saw in the newspapers that he had been made the organizing secretary of the new Association without being consulted, he took up the issue with Gandhiji, its Chairman. Gandhiji admitted his mistake and requested him to 'please forget the omission of formalities' and begin work. Kumarappa threw himself into it whole-heartedly. Maganwadi at Wardha became the headquarters of the All-India Village Industries Association. Kumarappa studied the state of various village crafts and industries, set up a museum and later a training centre for workers at Maganwadi to enable them organize various village industries which could supplement the income of villagers and prevent the exploitation of raw materials produced in villages by capitalists who processed them in large plants in the cities and sold the finished product at big profits. Kumarappa introduced the processing of raw materials in villages. Thus, rice shelling, pressing out oil from oil-seeds, making various *dals*, soap-making, paper-making, tanneries and shoe-making along with the making of other leather goods through the use of the skins of dead animals, were started. The carcasses of dead animals were also used for other purposes. All these cottage and

village industries were taken up in several places and research undertaken to improve tools, reduce labour and increase production along with improvement in the quality of products. What is known as intermediate technology or appropriate technology today thus came into play long before Schumacher and his colleagues took up that campaign.

Next, Kumarappa moved from Maganwadi to Seldoh, a village where he carried on his experiments with great enthusiasm. He worked hard and was a hard task-master. A strict disciplinarian, he earned the nickname of 'Colonel Kumarappa'. Once, during his work with the Bihar Relief Committee, Gandhiji wired Rajendra Babu to inform Kumarappa that he was coming at 10 p.m. to consult him about a certain matter. Rajen Babu informed him on arrival that there were a few annas' difference in the Relief Committee accounts. The annual meeting of the relief committee was to be held the next day. Kumarappa had shut himself in a room along with two others to sort out the discrepancy. No one could disturb him, so Gandhiji said, 'All right, I shall tackle him in the morning.' Next morning, as Kumarappa was going for his wash, Gandhiji called out and asked him for an appointment. 'Not today', replied Kumarappa, 'Maybe tomorrow'. Gandhiji had to leave for Wardha that evening, but even he could not break J.C.'s schedule for the day. The work of the Relief Committee came first with Kumarappa and, as Gandhiji had come without making an appointment, he had to face the consequences. He asked Mahadev Desai to leave some papers for Kumarappa and left. Kumarappa later went to Wardha to see Gandhiji about that business.

Once, an industries' minister of the newly formed Congress Government came to consult J.C. from Nagpur with other officials. They were given an appointment for 3 p.m., but they turned up at 5.30 p.m. Kumarappa, after his evening meal of a glass of milk and some fruit, was ready to go for a walk and severely reprimanded the minister and his entourage for their lack of punctuality. They were then allowed to accompany him on a five-mile walk, as a special concession! On another occasion, Professor N. G. Ranga, Achyut Patwardhan and others came to Maganwadi for an economic programme committee meeting. The evening sitting was to start at 7 and end at 9 p.m. The participants were held up at a tea party and turned up at 8.30 p.m.,

expecting to sit up late. But as the clock struck nine, Kumarappa adjourned the meeting. It was time to go to sleep, he said.

The intensity of his feeling, thinking and work, at last began to tell upon his health. He started having high blood pressure, which was related to mental activity. Physical work would lower the blood pressure, but Kumarappa was an intellectual, a thinker. Gandhiji tried to regulate his work, but Kumarappa had his own strict routine and his own way of working. But at last he had to slow down. He retired in 1953.

Kumarappa was in Madras General Hospital for several months before the end. Covering the walls of his room and the verandha with information charts and illustrations, he had made the whole place into a village-industries museum. He kept disseminating his message till his last breath. He died on 30 January 1960.

SUSHILA NAYAR

Henry Polak

Gandhiji's wider family claimed two Europeans as 'uncles'. Herman Kallenbach, a German Jew, who died before Gandhiji, and Henry Polak, an Englishman—also a Jew—who left us the other day.

Gandhiji's lifelong association with Polak began in a vegetarian restaurant in South Africa. Both were ardent vegetarians. Polak was then a young sub-editor on a South African journal, *The Transvaal Critic*. He had been following in the columns of *Indian Opinion* a controversy that Gandhiji had with the medical officer of the Johannesburg municipality. To Polak's mind Gandhiji had the better of the argument in that controversy. He felt drawn towards Gandhiji. Gandhiji, on his part was agreeably surprised to find in Polak an idealist whose love of justice and fairplay transcended the prevalent race prejudice which afflicted South African whites. He was particularly struck by Polak's candour. Strangely, what drew Polak to Gandhiji was not Polak's journalism but the fact that he was the only person that Gandhiji had met who had read Adolf Just's *Return to Nature*. They often met with two others like themselves in a vegetarian restaurant. Their menu consisted largely of fresh salads and uncooked food. The salads usually contained plenty of raw onions. Someone suggested that the four constitute themselves into the 'Amalgamated Society of Onion Eaters'. The idea was soon put into practice, Gandhiji becoming Chairman and Polak honorary Treasurer! Soon they found that they had many things in common besides vegetarianism, i.e., their love of the simple life, nature cure, their deep interest in the writings of Ruskin and Tolstoy and in the *Bhagvad Gita*. When Polak offered, as a labour of love, his services to Gandhiji as a writer for *Indian Opinion*, Gandhiji was delighted. Later, he induced Polak to sign up with him as an articled clerk and helped him qualify as an attorney. It was Polak who gave Gandhiji a copy of Ruskin's

Unto This Last, which brought about a revolution in Gandhiji's life, and when Gandhiji founded his ashram at Phoenix to practise the ideals embodied in that book, Polak joined Gandhiji in his new venture. 'We seemed to hold closely similar views on the essential things of life', Gandhiji later recorded, referring to Polak. 'He had a wonderful faculty of translating into practice anything that appealed to his intellect. Some of the changes that he had made in his life were as prompt as they were radical.' This passion to put into practice the ideals they believed in forged the closest bond between the two.

These were their 'bachelor days'. Towards the close of 1905 Gandhiji's family arrived from India to join him. Gandhiji persuaded Polak also to send for his fiancée from England and get married without waiting further, as he was inclined to, till he was in a position to provide his bride a comfortable family life. On 30 December 1905 she arrived. They were to be married the next day. Polak insisted on Gandhiji acting as his best man. That led to an amusing incident. In the colour-ridden atmosphere of South Africa it seemed hardly credible to the whites that a white couple could have a coloured person as their best man. And if both the bride and the bridegroom were not whites, a marriage would not take place, as under the current law the Registrar of European Marriages could not register marriages between black and coloured people! It needed the personal intervention of the Chief Magistrate, who was known to Gandhiji, to overcome such hurdles. He was the head of the Registration Department and sent a note to the Registrar about the Polak wedding permitting Gandhiji to be the best man. Only then could the marriage be registered on the scheduled date.

Soon the Polak couple merged with and became indistinguishable from members of the Gandhi family. In 1906 Gandhiji had to go on deputation to England. The Polak family in England more than reciprocated the warm welcome that Henry and Millie had received in the Gandhi family. It evoked from Gandhiji the following: 'I passed last Sunday with your sisters and your brilliant father. . . . Both the sisters are really most lovable, and, if I were unmarried, or young or believed in mixed marriage, you know what I would have done! As it is, I told them that if I had made their acquaintance in 1888 (for not

doing which they took me severely to task), I should have adopted them as daughters, from which proposition your father violently dissented.'

Three years after this, Gandhiji went to England on deputation a second time. Polak was sent to India to educate public opinion on the Indian question in South Africa on Gokhale's suggestion. This was his finest hour. He did his work diligently and brilliantly, winning golden opinions from all he came into contact with. So completely had he by this time come under the magic spell of the new philosophy and way of life that Gandhiji had presented to him that it became a bit difficult for the Master to curb the nascent enthusiasm of this hero-worshipping neophyte for him and for the work they were doing in South Africa. One of his reports after meeting the cream of the political elite in Bombay ran:

The conclusion I have come to after all these conversations and interviews is that India, even at its most intelligent, is many miles behind us in the Transvaal. The people here admit the value of passive resistance and say that you would not get anyone to go to gaol. I do not know what my countrymen are worrying about India for. It seems a harmless enough country. Provided they do not send another like you . . . here, the country is safe for apparently hundreds of years. Do you know I have not met a man here who approaches you spiritually and in intensity of devotion? Mr. G. K. G. is the nearest, and though he is probably ahead of you intellectually, in public experience and in administrative power, he is not in the running so far as pure religion is concerned and he himself admits it. . . . He tells me that the two men who have most deeply moved him are, amongst the older, Mr Ranade, and amongst the younger, yourself.

It brought the following admonition from the Master who had a strong dislike, bordering on allergy, to personal praise:

Can you not dismiss me from your conversations, at least with me? I think for the sake of the cause, too, you should leave me out of consideration. . . . I know you will retort that you never unnecessarily discuss me, but that is really not so. Your enthusiasm at times, as you will admit, does carry you away. You will find that if you persist there will be reaction, not against me, which would be quite bearable, but against the cause. I had to speak somewhat like this to Mr Gokhale also, when I was with him in Calcutta and when he heaped upon me praise that I thought was excessive. Indeed, I spoke to him somewhat bitterly.

But it was no use, his soul all aflame with the vision of the Burning Bush, the new convert was at it again.

Polak continued to be actively associated with Gandhiji throughout the great South African Satyagraha. When the memorable march of Indian passive resisters into the Transvaal took place, Polak was asked by Gandhiji to keep out of it as Gokhale had wired that Polak should go to India and help him in placing the facts of the situation before the Indian and Imperial Governments. Providence, however, had ordained otherwise. Polak felt he must have a personal consultation with Gandhiji before leaving for India and overtook him during the march. While they were in the middle of their consultation, Gandhiji was arrested and Polak had to take over charge of the marchers. They were all arrested. To secure witnesses for their conviction—for no one could be convicted merely on the ground of pleading guilty—would have meant loss of time and some headache for the authorities. They helped the authorities by testifying against one another by turns. In the result, Polak, too, was sent to prison along with Gandhiji and Kallenbach.

After the successful satyagraha campaign in South Africa, Gandhiji returned to India, but he asked Polak to stay behind to help and advise the South African Indian community in his absence, particularly during the implementation of the agreement.

Polak continued to take an active interest in the Indian question and particularly in the question of Indians overseas, even after he settled down to his legal practice in England. But his politics thereafter took a different turn from Gandhiji's. He did not see eye to eye with him on the question of non-violent non-cooperation, and dividing mists grew up between them at the time of the Quit India Movement. He even conducted active propaganda against us in the USA, which at the time hurt Gandhiji deeply and for some time he and Polak were almost on non-speaking terms. But the memory of past associations and devotion to the ideals they held in common provided a link stronger than the common political outlook or even personal loyalty.

A patriot, satyagrahi, and world citizen, one who had transcended the barriers of race, colour and caste, Polak has joined

the choir invisible
Of the immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence.

India will always cherish with affection and gratitude his manifold services to the Indian cause which was the cause not only of the few Indians domiciled in South Africa but of humanity at large.

1959

Dr Syamaprasad Mookerjee and Gandhiji

My first impression of Dr Syamaprasad Mookerjee was derived from his meeting with Gandhiji in August 1944, on the eve of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks. Gandhiji had identified himself with the Rajaji formula of a district-wise referendum of all the inhabitants on the basis of adult franchise in contiguous Muslim-majority areas in north-west and north-east India to decide the issue of separation from India. The safeguard was that the treaty of separation would also include, as an integral part of it, a provision for the joint administration of matters of common concern to the two parts, such as defence, commerce and communications. In the event, India had to pay a much heavier price and today both India and Pakistan are allowing the bulk of their revenues to be swallowed up by a futile race of armaments for mutual destruction. But at that time this was not clearly seen and Gandhiji's support to the Rajaji formula had caused some genuine perturbation among sections who could not envisage what Gandhiji was trying to avert. Gandhiji was able in the course of their talk to set at rest the fears set forth by Dr Mookerjee, as these were based largely on current misconceptions about Gandhiji's stand. What struck me at that time was the reverence in which Dr Mookerjee held Gandhiji and Gandhiji's deep personal esteem for him.

I got to know Dr Mookerjee further in August 1947, at the time of Gandhiji's great Calcutta fast. I, with Charu Chowdhury from the Gandhi Camp in Noakhali, had come to Calcutta on learning that Gandhiji was detained there on his way to Noakhali by Shaheed Suhrawardy. Our mission was to persuade him not to abandon his projected visit to Noakhali. It was decided that he would proceed to Noakhali before going to Punjab, where a serious situation was developing as a result of Partition, and an

announcement to that effect was made by Gandhiji at the evening prayer meeting. But on the same night communal madness broke out in Calcutta after a fortnight of fraternization, and Gandhiji decided to postpone his departure for Noakhali and to launch on a fast unto death unless the madness in Calcutta ceased. We were much afraid that, unless all sections united to put down the outbreak promptly, the shock-wave set up by it would touch off the dynamite in Noakhali and expose the minority community there and in the whole of East Bengal to an incalculable risk. We decided on our own to approach the Hindu Mahasabha leaders to bestir themselves and create conditions which would enable Gandhiji to break his fast, if they wanted to save the minority community in East Bengal.

We called on Dr Mookerjee first. He was laid up with acute gall-bladder trouble and had been ordered to bed by his doctors. But the fact that we had come from Noakhali and were working there in pursuance of Gandhiji's peace mission served as 'open sesame'. He half rose from his bed as we entered. After hearing us he said, 'I shall do anything that you would ask me to'. We told him that a strong, clear and unequivocal statement on his part, calling upon the majority community in Calcutta to return to sanity might be helpful. 'Very well, I shall do it immediately', he replied. 'Can you wait for half an hour?' We told him that we would call upon him in an hour, and in the meantime we would try to see another Mahasabha leader.

He proved as good as his word. When we returned to Gandhiji with his draft statement, he was writing a letter to Dr Mookerjee to ask whether a peace appeal from him to the people at that stage was not called for. To his agreeable surprise we handed him Dr Mookerjee's statement. With some minor changes it was duly released to the press. The next day, in spite of his illness Dr Mookerjee himself called on Gandhiji who was fasting, and threw himself into the work of restoring peace in Calcutta with all his heart and soul.

My next meeting with Dr Mookerjee after Gandhiji's Delhi fast in January 1948 was not so happy. Gandhiji had sent me to him with a message asking him to restrain some Hindu Mahasabha firebrands who were openly preaching the assassination of Congress leaders. Dr Mookerjee's reply was halting and it pained Gandhiji somewhat that a man of Dr Mookerjee's perspicacity

should be unable to assess fully the gravity of the peril which these manifestations portended. Gandhiji's unerring instinct had already sensed the deep plot with its wide ramifications which left the world in mourning a few days later and none more deeply than Dr Mookerjee himself. But Dr Mookerjee could not perceive it then, and it seems he never forgave himself for it. He expiated for it not only by severing all connection with the Hindu Mahasabha when his eyes were opened by the tragedy—alas, when too late—but also by offering to resign from the Central Cabinet of which he was a member.

The contact that I had established with Dr Mookerjee on this occasion served me in very good stead at the time of our first Inter-Dominion Conference that was held after Gandhiji's death. I had been specially deputed on behalf of the Gandhi Camp at Kazirkhil (Noakhali) to try getting certain decisions calculated to safeguard the position of the minority community in East Pakistan adopted, and to smoothen the way for the Gandhi Camps to usefully continue the activity launched under Gandhiji's direction for the achievement of communal harmony so that, to use his own telling expression, though India was divided politically, its heart should not be sundered.

Included in the delegation from Pakistan was a high Muslim official, F., whom I had known before he migrated to Pakistan. He held an important position in the railways in undivided India and, by his performance, had won the unstinted praise even of those who confessed to a communal prejudice against him. One of them—a leading captain of commerce and industry in Bengal—said to me, 'I differ from Gandhiji in regard to his attitude towards the Muslims, but I am coal and coal means transport and transport means F. I, therefore, swear by F.' He had initially opted for service in India, but was embittered by the grave injustice that he had to suffer in the wake of Partition. I had brought this case to Gandhiji's notice and, under his instructions, had discussed it with John Matthai, our Minister for Finance, Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru. Gandhiji asked me to tell him that he could be sure of getting full justice, but for that he must be prepared to endure to the end. He was prepared to put up with anything, he said, but when our bureaucracy decided to send him out of India on a long foreign tour, he took the bit between his teeth and shook the dust of India off

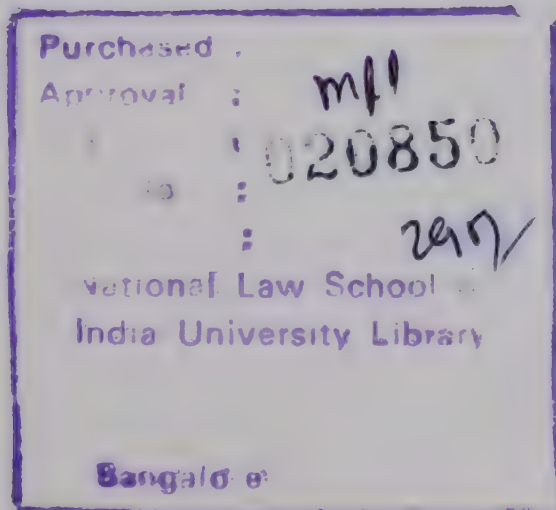
his feet. He had now accompanied the Pakistan delegation as its 'Co-ordinating Secretary'. Taking me aside one day while the Conference was in progress, he said, 'Look here, I swear by the same Master as you. I think it is Providence that you are here and I am in Pakistan. I am doing in my own way exactly what you are doing here. Let not the affinity between the two Bengals, which is more fundamental than any political divisions, be sapped.' Among the proposals before the Conference were the inclusion in the Cabinet on either side of a representative from the minority community as Minister for Minority Affairs; and posting in the affected regions on both sides of the border a member of the Central Government to help sort out differences and difficulties arising from the implementation of the decisions arrived at. Ghulam Mohammed Saheb told me that, if I could persuade Dr P. to come and settle in East Pakistan, he would take him in the Cabinet straightaway without even waiting for reciprocal action on the part of India. 'You can kill us by kindness', he said. 'If we fail to achieve accord now, while the opposite numbers on both sides who have known each other long and worked as colleagues are still alive, it will become ever so difficult when a new generation succeeds them who will have grown up as utter strangers to each other.'

There were snags and practical difficulties galore. A wide gulf yawned between profession and practice, but the idea gripped me. The Sardar was extremely sceptical. Even Pandit Nehru had his doubts. 'Ghulam Mohammed is a slippery customer', he warned me. In my dilemma I sought out Dr Syamaprasad to enlist him in persuading the Sardar on grounds which, I had discovered when I met Syama Babu at the time of Gandhiji's Calcutta fast, he fully shared with me. He immediately set to work. The result was the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact. A couple of days afterwards, I got a telephone call from the Sardar—it was 9.30 at night—to come and see him at his residence at Aurangzeb Road, over half an hour's drive from the Harijan Ashram in Kingsway Camp where I stayed those days. It was past the time for the Sardar to retire when I reached his residence, but he was still awake. 'I sent for you to tell you that I have done what you had asked me to,' he said. 'I was determined to see', he subsequently confided to me, 'that the Pact was fully implemented in letter and in spirit on our side and that the members of the

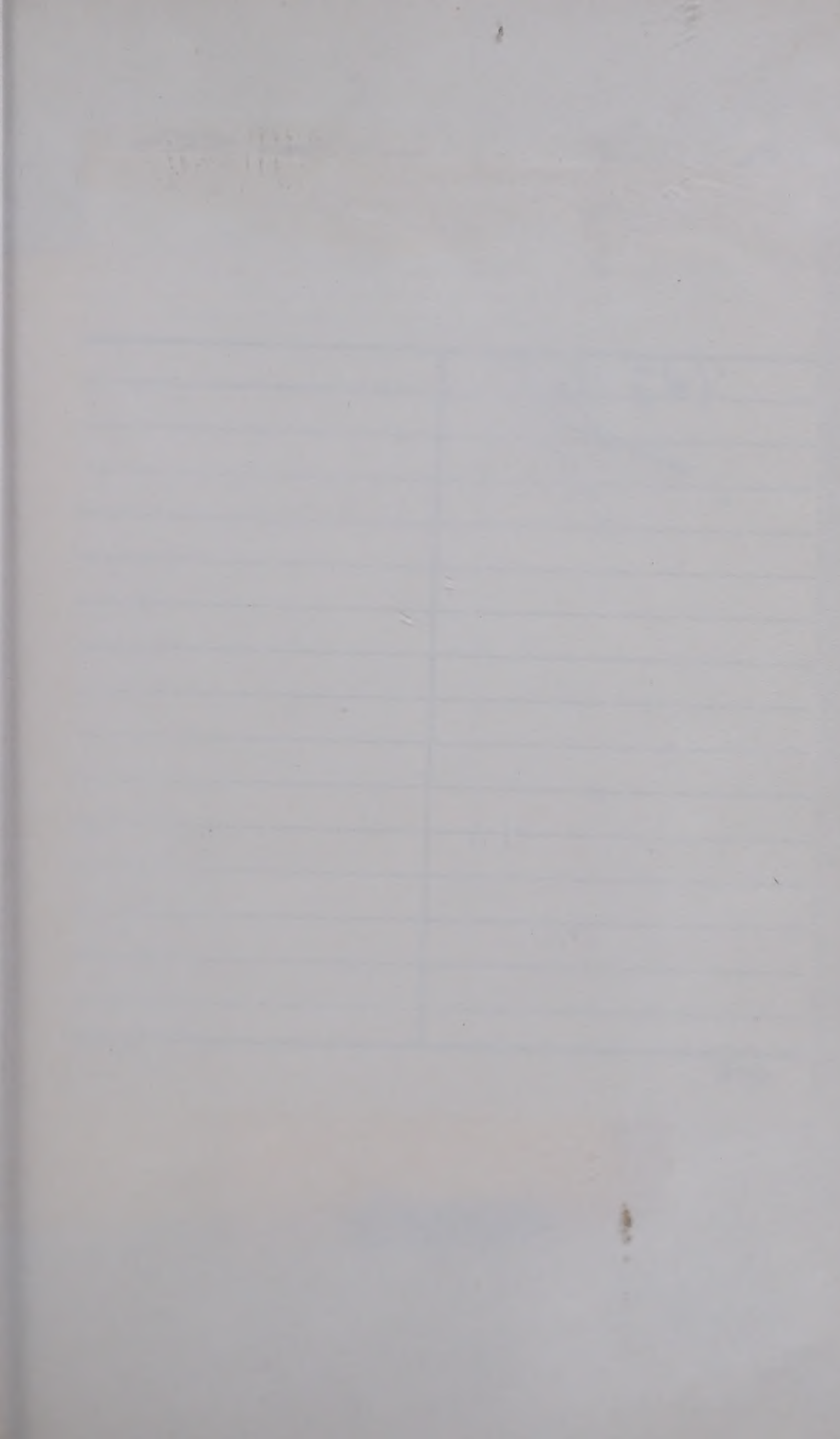
minority community in Bengal got full justice and can then demand reciprocal action on the part of the authorities in East Pakistan.' He had even planned to settle at the border for six months for the purpose if necessary. Unfortunately, inordinate delays in the implementation of the decisions arrived at in the Conference prevented the fruition of his plan. He felt deeply frustrated.

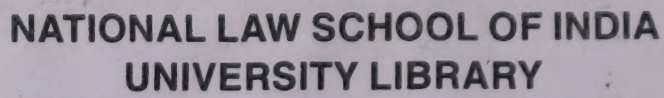
In a subsequent meeting after Gandhiji's passing away, Dr Mookerjee shared with me the secret not only of his personal reverence for Gandhiji but his great confidence in Gandhiji's leadership. Although Gandhiji always stood for forgiveness and non-violence, there never was any supineness in his attitude towards Pakistan. His unconditional insistence on correct, just and magnanimous conduct on the part of the Union Government in regard to the Indian Muslims and Pakistan was the counterpart of his determination to make Pakistan reciprocate in the same terms. It was a prelude to strong action, not appeasement or a compromise with justice. This forged a bond of understanding between Gandhiji and Dr Mookerjee which transcended all differences of ideology and political outlook.

1954



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IN GANDHIJI'S MIRROR
PYARELAL AND SUSHILA NAYAR

In this book, Mahatma Gandhi's close associates present evocative sketches of men and women who came in touch with Gandhi. The essays portray not just the people but also the tumultuous days of India's Independence struggle, the Partition, and its aftermath. Some of these personalities were associates of Gandhi during his South Africa days such as Henry Polak while others like Sardar Patel, Rajaji, the Frontier Gandhi had joined him in his Satyagraha struggle and civil disobedience movements in India.

Through these writings, one gets a glimpse of Gandhi's tolerance and his ability to carry with him people from different walks of life. Many of these accounts were written in Gandhi's lifetime and were scrutinized by him. Others were written after his death. This book will be valuable to Gandhi followers, scholars, and the lay reader.

Pyarelal (1899-1982) was private secretary to Gandhi and his biographer. **Sushila Nayar** (1914-2001), Pyarelal's sister, was Gandhi's physician and India's first woman minister.

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'Pyarelal [in this book] has given pen pictures of many individuals who grew under Gandhiji's influence and has also related his own experiences.'

— *Maharashtra Times*

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